

Bridges from the Past to the Future

By Anne Naumann

Calgary River Valleys (CRV) was formed in 1990 at the request of Calgary City Council as the River Valleys Committee (RVC) and was placed under the Parks Foundation Calgary's umbrella. It was created to provide an opportunity for Calgarians to participate in the development of policies and projects to manage use of Calgary's river valley system. We consider ourselves the "Voice of Our Rivers".

Our volunteer-run organization was extensively involved in the Plan-It Calgary process that resulted in the development of the "Principles and Design Considerations for River Crossings" that form Appendix B in the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP).

Green Line LRT and Deerfoot Trail Bridges

Recently CRV was invited to provide feedback on two important City of Calgary projects regarding proposed bridges to span the Bow River: the Green Line LRT and the Deerfoot Trail Expansion project. Anytime a new bridge is being considered, city planners need to keep in mind that a bridge is human development within a watercourse ecosystem. Our river valleys are a valuable natural asset, are the homes for fish, migratory birds, and other wildlife, and we need to protect these areas as much as possible when considering bridge projects. We appreciate the challenges the City teams face trying to balance competing interests to provide the best planning recommendations, so seek to inform them so that they are aware of all possibilities.

For the Green Line LRT, CRV provided a submission to the Green Line Committee regarding the change to a bridge versus a tunnel to cross the Bow River. Our submission was guided by the Principles for River Crossings from the CTP. You can find more information about the Green Line LRT at:

<https://engage.calgary.ca/greenline> Key points we raised included:

- Emphasizing the environmental and social aspects of a bridge instead of a tunnel need to be balanced with the economic aspects,
- Asking whether the new bridge location was determined as being the best for a bridge crossing or was the location chosen based solely on the previously planned tunnel alignment,
- Noting there are already 12 bridges within 2.5 km of the proposed new LRT bridge site downtown, and each bridge represents additional cumulative impacts on the river ecosystem,
- Noting any new bridge should be built to withstand significant flooding and riverbed erosion, and it also presents an opportunity after construction to restore some of Calgary's degraded riverbanks to improve wildlife habitat, and
- Requesting that technical documentation supporting the recommendation for the bridge location be made publicly available.

Next month we will let you know more about our involvement with the Deerfoot Trail project.

Reimagining Stewardship Programs

As with so many things in 2020, CRV is investigating ways of conducting our projects in a modified way to protect our staff, volunteers, and the public. For the last several years we have set up an interactive booth at the Creekfest event hosted by the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society. This year, the Friends of Fish Creek are having to adapt and change so that they can offer their 10th annual Creekfest event to the public, as Creekfest-Reimagined. CRV will be joining other partner organizations from

across the city so each can showcase the amazing work they are doing in support of the environment, education and recreation in our beloved green spaces.

Creekfest-Reimagined will start on Saturday, July 18th and continue for a full week of virtual, educational offerings. If you are interested in being made aware of our virtual programming, you can join our contact or membership list at: <http://calgaryrivervalleys.org/membership-donations/>