

Presentation at the Policy and Infrastructure Council meeting, February 26, 2013

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to present our ideas

My Name is Cal Dueck and I am a Co-chair of the Parker Wetlands Conservation Committee.

I have many questions as I stand here before you. Not least is the question of whether or not it makes any difference for ordinary people such as me to make the time and effort to present my thoughts. Does anyone listen or are all minds already made up? Is this proposed transit route actually going to be of benefit to the community or is it there simply to help developers build their own worlds?

These questions for me come from a real lack of understanding. I don't understand how the city could give the Parker wetlands to a developer for 1\$. Well, you say it was actually swapped for 9 acres plus one dollar, but I still don't understand how 9 acres, for which the developer paid roughly \$300,000, could suddenly, in about a year, be worth about \$1 million. How could the land nearly triple in value in about one year?

But, I digress. That is history and is being investigated.

When it comes to our current situation, I am filled with more questions. Will the city once again abandon due process? The developers have been consulted and apparently residents have as well, as seen by the two open houses that were held. But can you really say that residents have been consulted when the only ones with the time and resources to study the route and the issues are the consultants? Were there any resources offered to residents to study the issues? In spite of having no resources, and with only about 1 week lead time, and no high paid consultants, we have collected the names of over 500 people who do not want the city to build on the Parker wetlands. The high budget, highly advertised meetings garnered only 331 respondents. Do those intimidating meetings really qualify as consultation?

Again, I wonder what the terms of reference the consultants were given to do the study. We believe that at least one of the terms of reference they received was that there was supposed to be enough room to run active transportation beside the bus. However, the city has already spent millions building active transportation on Pembina. So wouldn't another AT route simply be a waste of money?

We also know that the consultants looked closely at TOD. Unfortunately for TOD along the hydro corridor, the report concludes that there really will be little development in or very near the corridor because of the hydro wires, so that few people in the so called TOD would be able or willing to walk to the stations. What do they suggest is the solution? Busses. Clearly busses would be needed to bring people to these stations so that they could then take rapid transit. P 36.

Also I wonder about the price of the new high density dwellings in the so-called TOD zones. Do any of you know the price range of the condos that are most likely to be built on the Parker and sugar beet lands? In other words, these will be high end. Do any of you know what the RT report says about the residents living on the east side of Pembina? Basically it says that they are wealthy and therefore there is almost no potential to increase ridership. So if we take the report seriously, then there is almost no potential to gain riders along a Parker line.

So if the Parker hydro route is chosen, then the city must be prepared to send busses through an area where there will almost certainly be no riders for close to 7 – 10 years. Any riders that are picked up after that will still be few and far between. In the mean time, 1000s of people on Pembina between Jubilee and Bishop Grandin will have dramatically **reduced** bus service, while empty busses traveling at high speed cruise through the Parker lands. Is that really what we want for RT? If BRT-oriented development didn't work in Minneapolis, what makes anyone think it could work here? If the report itself doubts the ability of the Rapid transit to pick up new passengers in the corridor, why then would it be the recommended route?

When the Parker lands were swapped we were told that there would be consultation with major stake holders. But isn't it true that the Environment is the biggest stake holder of all? Isn't it true that if we destroy the Environment that we destroy our health, well-being and economy? But who of you has proposed that an environmental study be done before the RT route is chosen?

The environmental study that was done is clearly only a preliminary one. For example, what is one of the first plants that one would expect to see when you walk into a wetland? Cattails, but they are not on the list of plants in area 3. **Based on the presence of some species of plants listed by the city, and based on the drainage and topography of the area, this Parker Green Space may support Tallgrass Prairie (an endangered eco system). Based on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Tolstoi, MB, we should expect to find hundreds of species**

of plants in area 3 but, like the cattails, it looks like many of these other plants were not identified.

As far as we know, there has been no study done on the wildlife in the area. There is good reason to believe that the area may be home to leopard frogs, an endangered species, but we don't know because no study has been done.

If a bus route is placed through the Parker lands and a connecting road built between Hurst and Beaumont, there will have to be major drainage put in place. What effect will the drainage of a large wetland such as the Parker wetlands have on flooding down river and on river bank erosion? Any drainage could seriously jeopardize the entire wetlands. Why has no water conservation study been asked for?

So why then is Parker 1B the recommended route? Could it be that it was recommended for the sole benefit of what has been called development? It is interesting to note that practically the only way that the Parker lands can be developed is for the city to put the rapid transit behind Parker Avenue and build a connecting road from Hurst to Beaumont. So, as it happens, this would be very good news for the developer. It would mean that there is a lot less money for him to spend on infrastructure. Unfortunately, for the residents of the area, this means that there is no more need or room for meaningful consultation, as the options for the development will be written in pavement.

Finally, high density population for Rapid Transit already exists along the Letellier Line, a recommended alternate route. But there is room for much more development along Pembina. Have any of you counted all the empty lots and older 1 story buildings along Pembina that could be redeveloped? There are many.

In Conclusion, I am interested to know what this particular committee is prepared to do to make sure that clear and transparent processes are put in place so that citizens can be heard.

What is the committee prepared to do to make sure that Rapid Transit actually serves real people not just possible future developments?

What is this committee prepared to do to make sure that we don't destroy our Natural Heritage and eco-sensitive areas, and that nature's voice is not silenced?

What are you prepared to do that will allow us, the people of Winnipeg, to trust that you care both for the people who live here and the environment in which we find ourselves.

Please listen to your heart. Vote to postpone this decision until there has been a full, **inclusive** consultation **process** with all the stake holders, and a full and transparent consultation has been done.

Thank You!

As Concepts 1A and 1B are aligned along the Manitoba Hydro right-of-way where there is not as much opportunity for development within the Corridor, the number of potential passengers within a short walking distance of the stations is quite low. Consequently, these alignments are more suited than Concept 2 to BRT technology as buses can reach into developed areas on the street system before or after operating on the transitway.