

OURS-Winnipeg (Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces - Winnipeg)

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**To: City of Winnipeg Standing Policy Committee
on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works**

OURS-Winnipeg (Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces – Winnipeg) is a community based organization that originated in Dec., 2011 to protect public golf courses from commercial or residential development.

OURS-Winnipeg has since evolved to become a city-wide green space advocate organization with a focus on urban green spaces, river and nature corridors and the urban forest.

OURS-Winnipeg continues to urge the City of Winnipeg to initiate consultations for the development of planning documents that preserve and enhance the natural amenities of Winnipeg.

The City of Winnipeg needs to develop an urban vision by enacting:

1. An Urban River Corridor Plan that includes all rivers and streams
2. An Urban Green Space Plan
3. An Urban Forest Management Plan

OURS-Winnipeg has consistently called for timely and meaningful public consultations involving a broad participation of citizens prior to any significant planning decisions being taken by the City of Winnipeg.

OURS issued a call in 2012 for consultations and protection of public golf courses and within several months over 8500 people signed the OURS petition. Citizens of Winnipeg want and demand timely and meaningful consultations regarding decisions that affect the future of their city.

OURS-Winnipeg now requests timely and meaningful community consultations prior to any further decision to amend the Winnipeg Transportation Master Plan regarding the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor alignment.

The Southwest Rapid Transit Stage 2 Alignment Study for the Rapid Transit Corridor is deficient in the public consultation area because the process engaged a limited number of participants rather than the full spectrum of stakeholders. The Alignment Study states (page 48):

“Transit hosted two Open Houses on Wednesday, September 19 and Saturday, September 22, 2012. 375 individuals signed the attendance register at the Open Houses; 237 on Wednesday and 139 on Saturday. 331 surveys were completed; 193 on paper at the public meetings and 138 online.”

By contrast, OURS-Winnipeg (a volunteer community organization) gathered over 8500 individual responses at public forums, on-line and by door-to-door contact. The responses came from across Winnipeg and strongly supported the protection and preservation of green spaces

The Southwest Rapid Transit Stage 2 Alignment Study is deficient in the assessment of the intrinsic value of the unique Parker Wetlands and the A/B quality Aspen Forest. In “ 8.2 Summary of Evaluation , Page 64 ” the Stage 2 Alignment Study gives a weighting of “LOW” for the Environmental category. This weighting of “low” is not appropriate if one considers the following quote from the Alignment Study (page 50):

“Most respondents, favouring all alignment options, view the Parker Lands as valuable green space and emphasize the importance of the wetlands, aspen forest, dog park and community gardens. They are concerned the environmental value will not be respected in the decision.”

The weighting of “low” is not consistent with the views of the importance of the environment expressed to OURS-Winnipeg by residents at numerous public forums, on-line and via door-to-door contact. OURS-Winnipeg requests substantive and meaningful consultations prior to any further route alignment decisions. Rapid Transit belongs to all citizens. Therefore, the stakeholder group in the consultation process should come from across the city.

City of Winnipeg planning documents identify parts of the Parker Lands as Ecologically Significant Lands. The inter-relationship of forest, wetlands and the wildlife in the Parker Lands should make preservation of this unique green space a priority.

Therefore, OURS-Winnipeg requests that an up-to-date, scientific Environmental Assessment of all the Parker Lands (Public and private) be completed prior to any decisions by the City of Winnipeg regarding the Southwest Rapid Transit Stage 2 alignment.

A large part of the Parker Land area is now private, but those lands were once public. The Fort Rouge/Parker land swap that converted of these lands from public to private ownership is currently part of an independent real estate audit. OURS-Winnipeg requests that the City of Winnipeg , at the very least, wait until the independent real estate audit findings and recommendations are made public before making any irreversible long-term decisions regarding rapid transit alignment and the Parker Lands. Perhaps what was once public land and is now private land may once again be public land.

OURS-Winnipeg calls for a Secondary Area Plan as a prior requirement to any development that takes place. We suggest that the Southwest Transit Route and associated route decisions constitutes the first step in future development.

OURS-Winnipeg contends that a proper Area Plan is therefore required BEFORE any final decisions are made regarding Rapid Transit route alignment. OURS-Winnipeg contends that the Area Plan must include consideration of the natural areas and the green spaces of the Parker Lands.

The process of developing an Area Plan must fully engage the area residents and area businesses as well as other stakeholders.