

Submission from WhitehorseWalks.com to YESAB re the RSW Alaska Highway widening project.

I think the highway proposal is missing some realities of city residents. On the YESAB website for this project, I mostly see a comments around vehicle issues, virtually none on walking, active transportation.

While I'm glad to see a roundabout, this project isn't only about driving. This is an infrastructure project on a major highway dividing the central core of our Urban Containment Boundary. As a sustainable, self-proclaimed wilderness city, recreational walking and active transportation should be a companion focus.

The recreational assets in this area include the OCP's Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park, a great resource and the Airport Perimeter Trail. Also in the mix is the Ear Lake area and MacLean Lake Park.

Residents affected live in: Squatter's Road and the many southern Whitehorse neighbourhoods; above-the-airport neighbourhoods linked by Hamilton Blvd.; and proposed Southern Urban Containment Boundary neighbourhoods.

In addition to recreational walking, kicksledding and biking, what seems to not be addressed is a broad plan to get active transportation people downtown and home from their homes.

The *Above-the-airport Trail Plan* didn't deal with the south end of Hamilton Blvd., nor does the *Whitehorse South Trail Plan*, nor does the *Robert Service Way Planning Study, 2018*. The *Bicycle Network Plan, 2018* shows Hamilton Blvd, RSW and the Alaska Highway as the All Ages and Abilities Network route in this area (but just as a concept, not a specific route, side of road).

The RSW planning study addressing part of this area noted

5. Work with Highways and Public Works to ensure that any future controlled intersection at the weigh scales includes a pedestrian crossing to facilitate connections to/from Ice Lake Park (see Section 9);

However, the highway plan ignores trail users connecting from the south end of Ice Lake, crossing the highway and using the Airport Perimeter Trail, either as a destination, or in transit to the Millennium Trail and downtown. The *2010 OCP* acknowledged this use when creating the borders of Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park, with its focus on connecting to the PG-zoned land covering the Airport Perimeter Trail along the southern airport fence. Further, the *Bike Network Plan* specifies this crossing of the highway and following the Airport Perimeter Trail all the way above downtown.

Also to note, the various new proposed access roads will add to the barrier of Hamilton Blvd. in any connectivity between the Maclean

Lake Park/Squatter's Road area, Paddy's Pond/Ice Lake Park and the Airport Perimeter Trail.

Solutions should focus on active transportation and creating walking routes/destinations. Opportunities are:

- connecting the highway's east side multipurpose trail through the Ear Lake area and then through the woods to the LNG plant and downtown.
- crossing the RSW lights at Ear Lake and going around the top of the escarpment and then downtown (as in the RSW plan).
- continuing our longstanding ability of parking at the south end of the airport and being able to walk around the airport on the Airport Perimeter Trail. This is a very popular walk with stunning 360° valley views.
- addressing road/mountain bikes driving along the highway who want to simply bike downtown to go to work (like a YG worker for example).
- facilitating crossing from Ice Lake to the Airport Perimeter Trail with an safety island, signage and speed limit adjustment.

It was discouraging when the obvious need for an underpass at the north end of the airport was so easily tossed aside — at the same time YG was promoting the *Clean Futures Plan* (even more so seeing the scope of the area actually planned for development)!

The RSW Planning Study also says:

While the protection of "destination" trails is important, the area's value for cross-city connections is equally important. This value will further increase should residential development in the Southern Urban Containment Boundary area west of the RSW area occur in the future. The key is to protect, enhance, and efficiently allocate what currently exists and to leverage future road corridor and access improvements to optimize active transportation and recreational opportunities.

It would be highly relevant to see what is actually proposed for the various trail routes and how what Highway is proposing will integrate them. It would be better to see this before the City is stuck trying to cobble together some less than ideal solutions over the coming years.

We have the possibility of a well-thought-out network of motorized trails, bicycle network trails and walking hiking kicksledding recreational trails that lure people out of their vehicles and into nature.

Peter