



LINK – BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) 1ST AVENUE

Engagement Summary

December 4, 2025



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In October and November of 2025 the City of Saskatoon engaged community members to provide information about the design for Link (Bus Rapid Transit) on 1st Avenue and collect feedback.

We asked and listened on the following topics:



- **Dedicated with-flow transit lanes (rather than contraflow)** through the center of 1st Avenue.
- **Potential removal of the median at 21st Street E and 2nd Avenue** to allow for all turning movements at the intersection.

1 BACKGROUND

In 2018 and 2019, the City engaged with the community regarding preferences to route the BRT system in Downtown on either 1st Avenue or 3rd Avenue. Information was presented on potential impacts to parking, vehicle traffic, public space and other factors associated with each of the routing options. At that time, the recommended option for the BRT system on 1st Avenue included dedicated transit lanes in the centre of the roadway, with a centre median platform located at each 21st Street and 23rd Street. This configuration required buses to run in a contraflow direction, running against general traffic, to allow boarding on both sides of the platform.

The updated design for Link incorporates with-flow dedicated transit lanes on both 1st Avenue and College Drive. On 1st Avenue, the design includes four BRT stations located on the far side of each intersection at 21st Street and 23rd Street. This updated design requires City Council approval before proceeding to detailed design ahead of construction, planned for 2027.

In October and November of 2025, the design for Link on 1st Avenue was shared with the community through come and go information sessions, including public sessions and dedicated sessions for property and business owners. An online survey was also available on the project's Engage page to collect comments and feedback on the proposed design. This document summarizes engagement activities and feedback received through these activities.



The City engaged with various community members, businesses and property owners through holding 4 Come and Go Information Sessions during different times of day. An Engage Page and a Survey were also available to inform residents and collect feedback on the design for Link – 1st Avenue.

1.1 Engagement Goals

The engagement goals for Link (BRT) – 1st Avenue were to:

1. **Inform:** Inform property and business owners on 1st Avenue, community organizations, residents and the broader downtown community about the proposed design for Link on 1st Avenue.
2. **Inform:** Provide clear, transparent communication about project timelines and decision points, reporting back on what we have heard and how feedback will be used.
3. **Involve:** Understand how the community and affected businesses and organizations will be impacted by the proposed design and construction process.
4. **Consult:** Gather feedback from property and business owners, community organizations, residents and the broader downtown community about the proposed design.

1.2 Engagement Participants

A specific focus was on connecting with property owners, businesses, organizations and residents directly fronting and flanking 1st Avenue as they will be significantly impacted by this project. However, a variety of community partners, businesses, residents and others may be interested in and impacted by the Link project on 1st Avenue.

Directly on 1st Avenue:

- ⊕ Property owners
- ⊕ Businesses and tenants
- ⊕ Residents directly on/flanking 1st Avenue
- ⊕ Midtown Mall

Broader Community:

- ⊕ Downtown YXE and downtown business community
- ⊕ 21st Street business community
- ⊕ Community organizations and service providers
- ⊕ Residents of downtown
- ⊕ Students
- ⊕ Transit riders

2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Table 1: Summary of engagement activities

Participants	Activity	Timeframe	Participants
DTNYXE	Information Meeting	October 17, 2025	1
Stakeholders along 1 st Ave / 21 st St E	Dedicated Info Sessions	October 22, 2025	30
Public	Come and Go Info Sessions	October 23 and 27, 2025	170
Total Event Participants			201
Public	Survey	October 22 – November 6, 2025	172
Total Survey Respondents:			172

Marketing Techniques

The following techniques were used to promote the engagement activities:

1. City Website
 - a. The Engage Page included information on the Come and Go information sessions and a link to encourage participation in the online survey.
 - b. Updates to the Project Webpage were made to encourage participation in the online survey and links to access project information, design drawings and renderings to inform the survey responses.
 - c. Internal advertising included correspondence to Mayor and Council, Engagement calendar alerts and a MyCity article.
2. Social Media
 - a. Posts to Facebook and Instagram publicized the open house events with 4,110 engagements and over 47,000 views
3. Flyer Mailout
 - a. Flyers (150) were hand delivered to identified properties near 1st Avenue and 21st Street E, encouraging them to attend an open house to learn about the project.
4. Email
 - a. Emails (355) were sent to identified businesses, property owners, residents, community organizations, advocacy groups and emergency service providers outlining the purpose of the project and encouraging them to attend an open house to learn more about the Link 1st Avenue.
5. News Release
 - a. A news release was circulated to share the event and engagement opportunities. Outlets that picked it up were Star Phoenix, CTV, CJWW, CKOM and Global.
6. Digital Large-Format Billboards
 - a. Six billboards at key locations to advertise public events, with 720 ad plays a day on each for the three weeks prior to the first event.
7. Portable Billboards
 - a. Eight billboards were placed around the city at key locations to advertise public events, plus three electronic signs near 1st Avenue Downtown.
8. Interior advertising in businesses
 - a. 13 e-boards in businesses across Saskatoon with a total of 87,860 impressions.
9. Corporate Information Sharing
 - a. Electronic posters were sent to the Midtown Mall and property management companies managing buildings on 1st Avenue and 21st Street, to share with their staff and tenants.
10. Newsletters
 - a. Event information was shared through DTNYXE's digital newsletter targeting businesses in the Downtown area.
 - b. Paid advertising in the Chamber of Commerce e-newsletter.
11. Digital Media
 - a. Digital Billboards shared event information at Midtown Shopping Centre.
 - b. Digital Banners shared on CKOM, Corus websites and other properties.
12. E-Newsletter
 - a. E-newsletter sent out to all Link subscribers.

2.1 Come and Go Information Sessions

Two information sessions were held on Wednesday, October 22nd, 2025 dedicated to property owners and businesses along 1st Avenue (between 19th Street and 25th Street) and 21st Street E (between 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue). Approximately 30 people attended these sessions, representing businesses and property owners along 1st Avenue and 21st Street.

Flyers were hand delivered to properties along 1st Avenue between 19th Street and 25th Street, and 21st Street E between 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue to promote the information sessions. Email invitations were sent to those businesses and properties. Existing stakeholders of the Link project that also received email invitations included emergency service providers, community organizations, advocacy groups and committee members.

Two public information sessions were held. One on Thursday, October 23rd and one on Monday, October 27th. Approximately 170 people attended these sessions over the two days. All sessions were held at the Hilton Garden Inn on 22nd Street and 1st Avenue.

Participants at the public information sessions were also able to provide feedback on the Transit Fare Review project and the Bus Network Redesign project.

What We Learned

Participants had the opportunity to view the design for Link on 1st Avenue. City staff and staff from CIMA+ (consultant working on Link) were on hand to answer questions about the design and talk about potential impacts along 1st Avenue and 21st Street E.

Participants expressed mixed support for the design. Some participants strongly supported the introduction of bus rapid transit downtown and the new Link system. Others expressed various concerns about the design, including related to removal of parking and a traffic lane on 1st Avenue, concerns about pick up/drop off locations and impacts to local businesses near 1st Avenue. Many themes were similar to those raised in the survey discussion below.

Impacts to individual businesses and property owners were also discussed, including proposed changes to driveway accesses and sidewalks.

2.2 Survey

An online survey was conducted through October 22nd – November 6th, 2025 to gather feedback on the design for Link on 1st Avenue. The survey was available on the project Engage Page and paper copies were available in person at the information sessions. A total of 172 responses to the survey were received.

The purpose of the survey was to collect feedback on the proposed design. Participants were asked how they currently travel along 1st Avenue and how they relate to 1st Avenue.

Survey responses were analyzed thematically to group concerns or opinions about the design for Link on 1st Avenue using M365 Co-Pilot. Results were reviewed and verified by the engagement team.

Questions we asked participants:

- Are you a business or property owner, resident, or visitor to downtown currently?
- How do you currently use 1st Avenue?
- What do you think of the design for Link on 1st Avenue?



What We Learned

Respondents were asked how they currently travel along 1st Avenue now. **Driving or riding in a vehicle** and **walking** were the most commonly reported methods of transportation.

Table 2: What modes of transportation do you currently use on 1st Avenue (from 20th Street to 25th Street)? (select ALL that apply)

Mode of Transportation	Count	Percentage
Driving or riding in a vehicle	151	88%
Walking	84	49%
Riding the bus	34	20%
Biking	32	19%
E-scooter or micromobility	5	3%
Other	3	2%
None	3	2%

Respondents were also asked how often they use transit. 80% of respondents said they use transit **less than once a month (20%) or never (60%)**.

Table 3: How often do you use transit?

Frequency	Count	Percentage
Daily (5-7 days per week)	9	5%
Several times per week (2-4 days per week)	8	5%
Several times per month (1-7 days per month)	15	9%
Occasionally (less than once a month)	35	20%
Never	103	60%

Respondents were asked about how they relate to 1st Avenue currently. The majority of respondents were people who visit downtown (72%), work downtown (40%), and residents, businesses or property owners in Saskatoon (47%).

9 unique responses were received from businesses or property owners directly along 1st Avenue or 21st Street E (respondents could select multiple categories from the options).

Table 4: Are you: (select ALL that apply)

Relation to 1 st Avenue	Count	Percentage
A person who visits downtown	123	72%
A resident, business or property owner elsewhere in Saskatoon	81	47%
A person who works downtown	69	40%
A community group or organization downtown	11	6%
A business owner, property owner, or representative elsewhere downtown	10	6%
Other	10	6%
A resident of downtown	8	5%
A business owner or representative along 1st Avenue (between 20th Street and 25th Street)	5	3%
A property owner along 1st Avenue (between 20th Street and 25th Street)	4	2%
A property owner along 21st Street (between 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue)	1	1%
A business owner or representative along 21st Street (between 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue)	0	0%

1st Avenue Design

Survey participants were asked to provide their comments on the design for Link on 1st Avenue in an open-ended question format. Themes from the responses are summarized below.

Feedback from Owners / Businesses along 1st Avenue and 21st Street E

(9 respondents)

- Concerns that removing a lane of traffic and parking will increase congestion and deter customers from visiting downtown, especially for businesses on 1st Avenue
- Concerns about congestion and disruption in front of Midtown Mall / between 20th and 22nd Street, including limiting parking and drop-off zones
- One respondent requested removal of the median on 21st Street E

The following themes were summarized from the survey responses more broadly:

Traffic and Congestion

The theme most commonly raised in the comments was concern for how the design will impact traffic flow on 1st Avenue. Concerns were raised about commuting during rush hour, during events downtown, and for residents visiting downtown businesses. Respondents expect congestion to rise on nearby streets and felt the design would have a negative impact on driving downtown.

Additional concerns about having less parking and pick up / drop off zones on 1st Avenue, particularly in front of Midtown Mall, were part of this theme.

A small minority of responses were supportive of removing traffic lanes on 1st Avenue. Comments suggested prioritizing the pedestrian experience along 1st Avenue, adding pedestrian-friendly streetscaping, and making 1st Avenue a transit-only street.

Transit and Safety

The second most common theme was about transit use and how this design will improve or not improve the bus riding experience in Saskatoon. Some respondents welcomed the future improvements to transit through Link and indicated support for the design.

Others expressed concern that riding the bus is perceived as unsafe, and people will not use the new system. Some felt that Saskatoon's ridership does not justify dedicated bus lanes and questioned large investments by the City in the Link system.

Safety considerations for the design itself included concern for the stations in the centre of the road requiring pedestrians to cross traffic lanes, concern for possible jaywalking, and questions about how bikes will be accommodated downtown.

Impacts to Business and Parking

A third theme was about how the design will impact downtown businesses. This was connected to a reduction in parking on 1st Avenue, and fears that customers would no longer visit downtown businesses due to the changes on 1st Avenue.

A minority of responses voiced support for the changes with respect to reducing parking and visiting local businesses, stating they would welcome the opportunity to easily travel to downtown shops using the Link system.

Other Questions

Comments and questions about a variety of topics included plans for snow removal and winter maintenance on the dedicated bus lanes. For example, respondents were concerned about the visibility and durability of painted bus lanes during the winter season.

Questions about how garbage and delivery trucks will maintain alley access, where cab pick up and drop off locations will be, were also recorded. Questions were also asked about the construction process and how access will be maintained to existing businesses and buildings.

Concerns about how much the Link system will cost the City were also raised by some respondents.

Median at 21st Street E and 2nd Avenue

While less than 10 respondents provided comments on this theme, survey respondents slightly favoured keeping the median at 21st Street E and 2nd Avenue.

Comments supportive of keeping the median felt that removal would make the street less safe for cyclists and pedestrians, while maintaining it would promote a pedestrian-friendly environment downtown.

Other comments supported the removal of the median and felt this would aid the flow of traffic on 2nd Avenue that may result due to congestion on 1st Avenue.

3 EVALUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement feedback forms were available at the Come and Go Information Sessions for participants to provide feedback on their experience. A majority of participants felt the sessions were easy to participate in and that the information was clear and understandable.

The online survey also included an opportunity for respondents to rate their experience. A majority of respondents felt the survey was easy to complete and took a reasonable amount of time.

The lowest level of agreement from both the in-person feedback forms and the online survey was related to the statement 'I understand how my input will be used.' Some participants said they were not sure how their input would be used, while others felt that the engagement process was not genuine and their input would not influence anything.

4 LIMITATIONS

The results of this engagement should be viewed with certain limitations in mind. Survey results reflected mainly people who drive or walk along 1st Avenue. Only 20% of respondents reported taking the bus, suggesting that the views of transit riders are not well represented in the results.

In addition, though this engagement did seek specific feedback from business and property owners along 1st Avenue and 21st Street E, and conversations were had with key groups at the dedicated come and go sessions, just 9 written responses were received from these respondents.

5 NEXT STEPS

A report on the design for Link on 1st Avenue will be presented to City Council in early 2026. For more information about the project and when the report will be presented to City Council, please visit the [Engage Page](#).

Thank you to all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.
