

# BOB KEITH

West LRT Community Advocate

Activity Report – May 2009



On October 16, 2008 I commenced my role as Community Advocate for the residents along the West LRT line. I attended over 24 public meetings held between the West LRT team and the various community representatives, as well as additional meetings with individual residents and communities for isolated issues.

At times, the public may feel that their feedback from the more than 60 hours of community meetings has not resulted in adjustments or alterations to the West LRT project. However, I'm pleased to say that the many comments have in fact been reviewed and considered, and changes have been made as a result of the thoughtful input from participants. For instance, some of the items that clearly show the result of public input are: station design, substation location, park and ride stalls, traffic management, pedestrian overpasses, and public engagement, including the creation of a new process to deal with traffic issues. I believe all of the input received will provide for a better West LRT in the end.

The process for the first phase of meetings in fall 2008 was met with much anxiety from many members of the public. The West LRT team was the first to admit that the timeline for engagement prior to the end of 2009 was short, but they were committed to do their best within the schedule provided. During the second phase of engagement in 2009, there has been more flexibility in the schedule, and as a result, additional meetings have been set up to discuss localized situations such as noise walls, bus stop locations and traffic issues.

I've heard from some community representatives who are happy with the engagement process. For the most part, they have said their concerns were addressed (they did acknowledge that not all their preferences were accepted). There are other representatives who have left me with the

impression that nothing good has come out of the engagement process. However, I feel the West LRT staff have endeavored to respond, or have experts provide information dealing with each matter and issue. Although community residents may not share the same view as The City representatives, the public has been provided with a response.

In addition to the formal meetings, I've had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with some residents on their specific situations. I believe these meetings have been very beneficial to the residents. I've also exchanged a myriad of e-mails and telephone calls with many other residents and hopefully I have provided some value in conveying information and direction on how to proceed further, if requested.

As with most new infrastructure projects, there is public fear of the unknown and concern about the worst case scenario occurring. My advice is to continue to seek out answers from The City representatives and weigh their responses against your values. Any major infrastructure project needs to find a balance between various and often contradictory demands from adjacent residents, users' needs, fiscal responsibility, city policies, safety concerns, design standards, etc. As a city employee during my former career, I would have loved to say yes to the individual requests, but it simply isn't that easy. Sometimes in the end, I find we may agree to disagree.

Respectfully submitted  
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