

May 7, 2009

Mayor Dave Bronconnier  
The City of Calgary  
700 Macleod Trail SE  
Calgary AB T2P 2M5

cc: All City of Calgary Alderman  
Mr. John Hubbell, GM Transportation

Re: **Eastbound Extension of Airport Trail and Related Works**

**Dear Mayor Bronconnier:**

As a result of several community consultation meetings held recently in relation to the development of a future north-south runway (the “Parallel Runway”) at the Calgary International Airport, the possible eastward extension of Airport Trail, including a tunnel under the Parallel Runway, has again been the subject of public interest and comment.

We have recently become aware that the City Administration has been directed to bring forward a cost estimate for a ‘segmented’ tunnel by June 2009 and that in the recently released draft Transportation Bylaw, the eastward extension of Airport Trail and the associated tunnel has been removed.

We therefore concluded that it would be best to recap our dialogue on this matter over the past several years and to provide clarity regarding the plans and position of the Calgary Airport Authority on this matter.

**Context:**

Calgary International Airport is a significant economic force in the local economy with a value-added GDP of \$ 6 billion and an employment impact of 40,000 jobs; as well as being the major point of air access for Alberta. In addition to being the head office location for WestJet, Calgary International is served by major international passenger and cargo airlines such as British Airways, Lufthansa, Air Canada, KLM, Cargolux and Asiana. Over the past seventeen years, the Calgary Airport Authority has invested approximately \$ 1 billion dollars in capital renovations and expansion to keep pace with the growing needs of our city.

Significant plans are now underway for further terminal and airfield expansion over the next ten years, with a total planned capital investment in the range of \$ 3 billion over this period. These developments are essential to the preservation and enhancement of Calgary's position as Alberta's premier passenger and air cargo hub.

The Parallel Runway has been planned since the 1970s when the Federal Government acquired the associated land. The Airport Vicinity Protection Area (noise) regulations have provided the basis for compatible land use development in reference to the Parallel Runway since 1979. This \$ 500 million dollar project has now entered the Environmental Assessment and project design phase. Construction launch is scheduled for 2011 with an in-service date of late 2014.

In 2002, the Calgary Airport Authority began an update of its long-term Master Plan, during which, it was determined that the future Parallel Runway and associated taxiway system should be designed to meet the technical requirements of new large aircraft such as the Airbus 380. The effect of this design requirement was that Barlow Trail would be closed between Airport Road and 48 Avenue NE. As an historical note, this section of roadway was constructed and maintained by the Federal Government/Airport Authority as an access route to the Air Terminal Building, although it has also been available for public vehicular 'transiting' traffic due to its location and connection to Barlow Trail North.

Lengthy discussions took place between the City and Airport Authority during 2003, following which we agreed that the City could extend Airport Trail east, across airport lands via a roadway and tunnel system, and our updated 2004 Master Plan reflected this change.

Following our annual presentation to City Council in March, 2005, we wrote to your office and advised that "In terms of timing, we believe that construction of the road works noted above (Airport Trail eastbound including tunnel) should be planned for no later than 2010". I wrote again to your office in July 2006 and advised that 'our recommended schedule would see final design completed by 2008 and construction completed/road in-service by 2011.

In February 2007, we wrote to City Manager Owen Tobert and asked for confirmation of the City's continuing desire to extend Airport Trail east as well as confirmation of the City's development schedule that would permit construction completion no later than November 2011. In response to this letter, we received a letter from the City Transportation General Manager who advised that the construction timeline could not be met and that due to the high cost of the Airport Trail extension, the City would be exploring other network alternatives. Based on this advice, we advised the City in June 2007 that the Authority would be removing the eastward extension of Airport Trail from our Master Plan and that future airport access, after the de-commissioning of Barlow Trail south, would be via the existing Airport Trail and Barlow North roadways.

In January 2008, following representations by Ward Alderman Jim Stevenson that the City was still interested in the eastward extension of Airport Trail, we wrote to Alderman Stevenson (copy to your office and others) and advised that the following would be required for the Authority to change its plans in this regard:

- ✓ Secure funding of \$450-500 million for the tunnel and associated works no later than the summer of 2008
- ✓ Secure a project delivery schedule that would permit 100% design to be completed in 2009 and construction of the tunnel, roadways and roadway bridges to be completed by the fall of 2011

In November 2008, we advised the City Transportation Manager that a ‘segmented’ tunnel would not be permitted due to operational and safety issues; requested final advice on the intentions of the City to proceed with this project; and advised that “in the absence of such advice, we will have to assume that both airport and City planning will proceed on the basis that this project will not be further considered and will be removed from the official plans of both organizations”.

During the public City Council presentations/discussions on this topic in November 2008, we observed that the City Transportation Department was clear in their view that an eastward extension of Airport Trail was not an essential component of an effective long-term City road network and that other steps would be taken to support east-west City traffic requirements.

Most recently, in January 2009, we became aware that City Council had resolved to commit \$ 50 million towards the extension of Airport Trail, contingent upon matching funds from two levels of government and the Calgary Airport Authority. We once again wrote to the City Transportation Department to (re)confirm our previously noted statements regarding this project and to advise that we were proceeding with the planning and design of the Parallel Runway, which did not incorporate a tunnel under the runway.

As noted above, we have recently observed that the draft City Transportation Bylaw has eliminated the eastward extension of Airport Trail/tunnel, and we take this as further confirmation that from a technical planning perspective, the City Transportation Department has developed road network alternatives that will accommodate future east-west vehicular traffic in an acceptable manner.

### **Issues and Questions:**

Certain issues and questions have been noted in various public accounts of this matter and we are therefore providing the following confirmation of our views and position.

- a) Is the eastward extension of Airport Trail required to provide reasonable public access to Calgary International Airport?

Answer:

No. Calgary International is essentially an ‘inner-city airport’, albeit one protected (as noted earlier) by the AVPA regulations, which helps to minimize conflicts between residential housing and aircraft operations. This locational benefit facilitates excellent access by all Calgarians. Northeast residents, in particular, enjoy particularly timely access and this will continue in the future. The tunnel is not required for airport access. Airport Trail will be the main airport access point in the future, with supplementary access via Country Hills Blvd. and Barlow Trail North.

We expect many residents in northeast areas such as Saddle Ridge likely access the airport today via Country Hills Blvd., and as these communities expand further to the north and east in the future, this will likely continue to be the case. The northerly access option will actually be enhanced with the further development of Metis Trail, Country Hills Blvd. and the new Ring Road.

- b) Is the eastward extension of Airport Trail required to provide reasonable east-west traffic flows for the city road network in the future?

Answer:

According to the City Transportation Department, no. We understand that upgrades to Country Hills Blvd., construction of the new Ring Road and perhaps other plans will facilitate east-west traffic flows in the future.

- c) What is the cost of the east extension of Airport Trail and tunnel?

Answer:

The 2008 cost estimate of \$530 million dollars was based on the functional plan prepared in 2005 by EarthTech and includes roadworks, tunnel and three separated grade interchanges at 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Barlow Trail and 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Please note the following associated comments in this regards to this cost estimate:

- i. We would NOT permit the construction of a ‘segmented’ tunnel (three separate tunnel structures across the airfield) for reasons of aviation safety.
- ii. Projected traffic volumes would require the concurrent construction and in-service of the separated grade interchanges, if the eastward extension/tunnel were to proceed, which is why they form part of the cost estimate. Without these concurrent interchanges, we expect access to the terminal would actually be reduced and delays increased, by the opening of Airport Trail to east-west city network road traffic.

iii. We do not envisage any scenario whereby the tunnel project would proceed with only partial funding secured, as this could result in a partially or inadequately scoped project that does not accommodate effective access and egress to the terminal area.

d) Is the Calgary Airport Authority prepared to contribute to the cost of the Airport Trail East extension and tunnel?

Answer:

No. We have consistently advised that this extension is not required for airport access purposes and therefore it would be inappropriate for airport users to pay an associated cost. In addition, due to our very large airport infrastructure requirements over the next ten years (as noted above), we simply do not have the financial capacity to participate.

It has been noted that the Airport Authority did provide \$11 million of the \$22 million cost of the existing Airport Trail from Deerfoot Trail to the Air Terminal Building. This was done in recognition that Airport Trail was an important long-term access route for vehicular traffic accessing and leaving the Air Terminal Building area.

e) Does the current Parallel Runway design process include provision for the eastward extension of Airport Trail and related tunnel?

Answer:

No. Based on the advice from the City regarding future road network plans, we advised the City Transportation Department in January 2009 that we were proceeding with project design on our previously advised schedule and that this design does not include the tunnel. We have also publicly advised other groups, including City Council in March 2009, of our development plan and timetable.

f) If project funding were to become available in the future, could/would the Airport Authority change its design to incorporate the Airport Trail extension and tunnel?

Answer:

As indicated above, we are actively proceeding without the incorporation of a tunnel in our design. Any change at this point would cost the Airport Authority, and by extension our aviation stakeholders, time and money. We cannot, therefore, provide any confirmation that it would be possible or practical to change this development plan in the future.

- g) Is there any additional cost impact on the Airport Authority, over and above the projected \$ 530 million cost of the tunnel/roadway project?

Answer:

Yes. Although we have not carried out detailed engineering studies in this regard, we estimate that there would be an additional cost to the Airport Authority in the range of \$ 80 million dollars that would have to be accelerated by 15 to 20 years to connect the internal Air Terminal Building road network to the new Airport Trail 'freeway'. As previously advised to the City in our correspondence dated July 21, 2008, "we believe some type of cost-sharing by the City on this portion would be required in order to permit the entire endeavour to proceed".

- h) Is there any connection between the Airport Trail tunnel and future LRT access to the airport?

Answer:

No. The Airport Authority has been briefed by the City Transportation Department on the long-term expansion plans for LRT and we understand that future LRT access to the airport would be via a new line designated as the 'north' leg of the LRT, which would run up the west side of Deerfoot Trail and the airport. As an aside, we certainly endorse this type of forward planning and our Master Plan anticipates the eventual connection of the LRT to the airport terminal. In the event that surplus public funding is available in the near term, the advancement of the north leg of the LRT could provide significant community and connectivity benefits.

We are not aware of any interest from either the Provincial or Federal levels to cost-share in the Airport Trail extension and by observation of various public announcements, we are aware of the large number of potential public works projects that are competing for a finite amount of public funding, even in these times of 'economic stimulus'.

We fully respect the difficult decisions that must be made by City Council and other levels of government in regards to evaluating the cost-benefit of potential transportation projects and we recognize your jurisdiction in this specific funding decision, while also recognizing the tremendous interface that would be required between our major transportation engineering project (the Parallel Runway) and a potential tunnel/road system that would traverse airport property. From a planning context, certainty of future transportation plans and network expansions provides the broader community (business and public alike) with the ability to move forward and shape their individual decisions with confidence. In this respect, the draft Transportation Bylaw, as tabled in its current form, is likely to provide the certainty that all parties require.

As this is a public letter, it may be provided to other parties who have an interest in this matter.

I am available to discuss any aspect of this letter, in person or by telephone (735-1244), at your convenience.

Yours truly,

**The Calgary Airport Authority**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Garth F. Atkinson', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Garth F. Atkinson  
President and Chief Executive Officer