

CONFUSED PLANNING: THE CLASH BETWEEN FREEWAYS, PARKLAND
PRESERVATION AND LRT IN MID-20TH CENTURY EDMONTON

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Author's Note:

My interest and passion for both the history and the contemporary understanding of municipal governments would not have been possible had I not encountered the passion and interest Professor James Lightbody (1945-2018) had for the study of municipal government. His dedication, spanning 47 years at the University of Alberta, and witty (and at times challenging) exploration of municipal snollygosters sparked an interest in a field I had never previously considered. I feel I am better off for having the chance at meeting him, being challenged by his classes, and being introduced to an often overlooked field of study. For this, I am very thankful.

Much of Edmonton's municipal past lacked any overarching development plan.¹ Once such absentee municipal planning gave way to more concrete forms of municipal planning in terms of shaping the urban environment, conflicting goals soon emerged. Between 1949 and the early 1980s a conflict in planning goals within both the Edmonton District Planning Commission and the City of Edmonton, at this time governed with a commission board became apparent.² Often this conflict played out in Edmonton's river valley with competing visions of preservation and freeway construction. River valley neighborhoods were threatened with land acquisition policies that viewed the river valley as the sole domain of parkland. Concurrently, those neighborhoods and much of the river valley were also threatened by the *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study (METS)*. Citizen engagement in an otherwise politically apathetic city (prior to this) led to its demise, although the threat of large-scale removal of river valley parks and homes throughout the city loomed for some time.³ The period between 1949 and 1983 represents a period in Edmonton's history where environmental protection policy clashed with transportation policy that advocated for the wholesale destruction of the river valley and countless homes. It is this conflict that led to increased political awareness that directly contributed to the demise of the *METS* scheme and gave rise to renewed support for river valley protection while making rapid transit a possibility for Edmonton.

The first conflict between urban development and *nature* in Edmonton during this period begins with a 1949 city council decision to transition four river valley neighborhoods into

¹ Dale, Edmund H. "Decision Making at Edmonton, Alberta 1913-1945: Town Planning without a Plan." *Plan Canada*. 1971.

² James Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, eds. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton. University of Toronto Press, 1983. 255.

³ Bower, Shannon Stunden. "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," *Urban History Review / Revue D'Histoire Urbaine* 44, no. 1 (2015), 59-72.

parkland. It should be noted that the 2004 *Rossdale Historical Land Use Study* refutes the existence of such a decision.⁴ However, the *Edmonton General Municipal Plan, 1980* does validate the claim City Council decided to convert Rossdale, Riverdale, Cloverdale, and Lavigne into parkland in 1949.⁵ What is not in question is the scheme itself. Both documents agree that the City attempted to acquire land in these neighborhoods for the purpose of eventual conversion to parkland. These neighborhoods were characterized as “non-viable.”⁶ Rather than attempt a full-scale expropriation of hundreds of properties at once, the city decided it would be appropriate to engage in a policy of long-term land acquisition. As homes and businesses came onto the market the city would purchase them with the eventual goal of demolishing whatever occupied the property.⁷ This resulted in a general blight of these neighborhoods as the years went on as the city had little incentive to maintain these properties.⁸

The city did not desire to pay more than was necessary for these properties, which led to its decision to deny renovation and development permits in the four aforementioned neighborhoods.⁹ Furthermore, infrastructure upgrades in these neighborhoods, such as those for sewer systems, were given minimal priority.¹⁰

The City believed protecting the river valley through the creation of parks meant residential development in areas such as Rossdale was undesirable and inconsistent with policy

⁴ Harold Kalman, Commonwealth Historic Resource Management and Edmonton, *Rossdale Historical Land use Study* (Vancouver, BC: Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, 2004) 130-31.

⁵ City of Edmonton Planning Department, *Edmonton General Municipal Plan 1980*, 1980. “Policy Report #10”.

⁶ City of Edmonton Planning and Building, *Rossdale Area Redevelopment Plan*, 1986. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Gorrie, Peter. “A New Lease on Life for Edmonton’s Valley Villages.” *Canadian Geographic*. 106.2. April/May 1986. 24-30.

that favored the encouragement of recreational activity within the river valley.¹¹ However, as the policy of land acquisition continued into the 1970s, some were beginning to question the effectiveness of such policy. The *University Practicum on Inner City River Valley Land Use* exemplifies this well. Published in 1975, it makes a clear case against the City's stated policy of land acquisition. Within its first few pages, it demonstrates that those within City administration were not entirely convinced reserving the river valley for recreational use was the best way forward. For instance, Lillian F. Dean, a city planner, said the conflict between Riverdale and recreational interests in the valley "may be more apparent than real."¹² Dean goes on to argue housing and recreational activities could easily coexist in the valley.¹³

1963 marks a watershed year in Edmonton's transportation and parkland planning. 1963 saw the publication of both the *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study* and the *Metropolitan River Valleys Parks and Recreation Study*. Despite being authored by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, no consistency in their objectives can be found in relation to river valley policy. In short, *METS* laid out the transportation woes of the early 1960s, a projection of how this was to worsen by 1980 and presented a mitigation strategy.¹⁴ This mitigation strategy briefly mentions public transit, but its centerpiece is a massive city-wide freeway system emanating from the river valley.¹⁵ The authors of *METS* recognized the problems

¹¹ *The University Practicum on Inner City River Valley Land Use*. Department of Extension, University of Alberta, 1975. iv-v.

¹² *Ibid.*, v.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Edmonton District Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 1*, 1963.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 2*, 1963). Most of the study is dedicated to exploring the intricacies of this detailed freeway network.

this might bring about, but offered few solutions to the recognized problem in either of its two volumes:

Another potential indirect cost, which is very difficult to measure, is the loss of urban amenities that may be sustained in the building of the transportation network. This may take the form of the sacrifice of parks or open space, or the disruption of stable communities as new transportation rights-of-way are created. Such cost, however, should be, and can be, held to a minimum by skillful planning.¹⁶

Volume Two of the study, which contains more detailed drawings of the freeway network provides little to suggest much consideration was given to minimizing environmental impact through “skillful planning.” Rather, it seems freeways were blindly drawn through established neighborhoods with little regard for anything that presently occupied the land.

The *Metropolitan River Valleys Parks and Recreation Study* conversely recommended the protection of the river valley and the expansion of attractions present within it. It was thought the betterment of the river valley could be brought about through the construction of several golf courses (the number of which was determined through an analysis of the appropriate per capita number of golf courses), parks and scenic roadways.¹⁷ Unlike *METS*, such scenic roadways were to be quiet two-lane roads rather than freeways whose construction would constitute rapid destruction of any scenery.¹⁸ Swimming pools, boating facilities, and pathways were also called for.¹⁹ The focus was on making the river valley an accessible recreational destination for Edmontonians.

With respect to the four neighborhoods already at risk of demolition during this period by the City, Rosedale and Cloverdale illustrate well the inconsistent city planning found during this

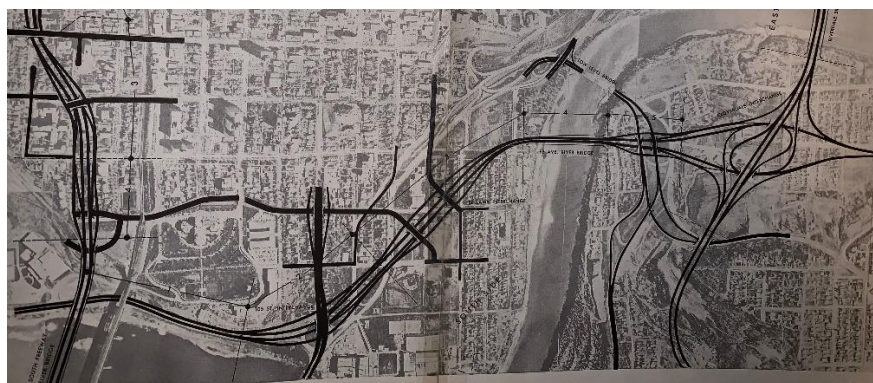
¹⁶Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 1*. 58.

¹⁷ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission. *Metropolitan River Valleys Parks and Recreation Study*—1963. 1963. 12-18.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

period. *The University Practicum on Inner-City River Valley Land Use* details the City's presumed conflict between housing and the recreational use of the river valley. Yet, despite seemingly attempting to protect the valley, the City rapidly accelerated its land acquisition process in Rosedale during the late 1960s into the 1970s to allow for the construction of a *METS* freeway.²⁰ Today, Edmonton motorists would be familiar with this as the James MacDonald Bridge and 98th Avenue. This was a planned component of the "Downtown Freeway Loop," a collection of freeways that looped around the Central Business District forming a downtown ring road.²¹



A portion of the "Downtown Freeway Loop" from Volume 2 of *METS*. Notice how little regard there seems to be in terms of existing development where the freeway is planned to go. Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 2*. See "Figure 6".

The James MacDonald Bridge was constructed likely because the city was fully aware the poorer residents of Rosedale did not have the means to organize a strong enough fight against the city to stop it.²² The city demolished 80 homes to allow for the construction of the bridge which successfully divided the neighborhood into three disparate parts.²³ This was not seen as inconsistent with the City's other goal of gradual land acquisition for the protection of the river

²⁰Kalman, *Rosedale Historical Land Use Study*, 121-22

²¹ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 2*. See "Figure 6".

²² Kalman, *Rosedale Historical Land Use Study*, 122.

²³ Kalman, *Rosedale Historical Land Use Study*, 122.

valley and the creation of river valley parks. The *Metropolitan River Valleys* report called for the protection of the river valley by establishing a buffer between parkland and industrial development and through the creation of expanded recreational services, yet the city of Edmonton was swiftly attempting to pave as much of it as they could.²⁴ Any potential discontent among citizens was a moot issue for the municipal government. The Commission Board that governed Edmonton was characteristically uninterested in citizen input.²⁵ Citizen input was generally seen as intruding upon the work of Commissioners, of which the mayor was one.²⁶

The 1970s and early 1980s saw the continued policy of land acquisition in the river valley. The *Edmonton General Municipal Plan* of 1980 also affirmed well *why* the city believed these neighborhoods had to go:

Due to its ecological importance, recreational potential, and consistency with City objectives to develop the river valley and ravine system for public park and recreational purposes only, all private land [...] lying within the boundaries of the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw is subject to long-range consolidation for public park and environmental protection purposes. In this regard, it is recognized that municipal ownership would provide the best means of control ...²⁷

This excerpt suggests that the City of Edmonton was purchasing properties for the greater good of the city. This served to protect (or give the illusion of) Edmonton's river valley, ensuring that

²⁴ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan River Valleys Parks and Recreation Study--1963*, 1963. 1-21. Since this was a regional report, it also details potential uses and protection of the areas along the Sturgeon River in St. Albert and surrounding Sturgeon County.

²⁵ James Lightbody, *City Politics, Canada* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006) 147; 152. doi:10.3138/9781442602038. <http://deslibris.ca/ID/405066>. This is not specific to Edmonton's Commission Board. As is noted within the text of Lightbody's book, Commission Boards are generally structured in this fashion. They take the concept of business management and attempt to apply such thinking to local government.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 152. The mayor was the only elected official on the Commission Board. The other three Commissioners were appointed by City Council.

²⁷ City of Edmonton Planning Department, *Edmonton General Municipal Plan 1980*. "Policy Report #10." 10.14

it remained in a state of nature. However, such commitment to this is questionable, a point well demonstrated by *METS*.

By 1984, (coincidentally around the same time that Edmonton's Commission Board met its demise) the plan of converting these neighborhoods into parkland was shelved.²⁸ The 1986 *Rossdale Area Redevelopment Plan* and the 1985 *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan* all reaffirmed this. The 1985 plan for the broader river valley differed considerably from the *Edmonton Parks and Recreation Master Plan 1970-1980* which advocated for land acquisition, as did the *Edmonton General Municipal Plan, 1980*.²⁹ Although the city had decided that these neighborhoods ought to remain, it left these areas in a continued precarious state. Since the city had been the primary landowner, many properties had fallen into disrepair.³⁰ Further, many homes were in disrepair since renovation permits were mostly denied during the period of land acquisition.³¹ In addition, infrastructure had not seen recent upgrades since it had been considered wasteful to repair something that was soon to be a park.³²

The destruction of homes in Rossdale may have seen little political resistance, but the same cannot be said of MacKinnon Ravine. The ravine had previously been a well-used, mostly tree covered, park.³³ By the early 1970s, the *METS* plan was still making good progress. The ravine saw most trees removed and the early stages of a road forming, with a roadbed being laid

²⁸ Lightbody, *City Politics, Canada*, 147; Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 68.

²⁹ City of Edmonton. *Edmonton Parks and Recreation Master Plan 1970-1980*. 1972. 63; City of Edmonton Planning Department, *Edmonton General Municipal Plan 1980*. "Policy Report #10".

³⁰ The City of Edmonton, *Rossdale Area Redevelopment Plan* 8.

³¹ Gorrie, Peter. "A New Lease on Life for Edmonton's Valley Villages." *Canadian Geographic*. 106.2. April/May 1986. 24-30.

³² Ibid.

³³ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 62.

and a drainage system constructed in the early 1970s.³⁴ This ravine was soon to become the “Jasper Freeway,” a freeway that would have begun at the traffic circle located in Rosedale at the north side of the 105th Street Bridge (Walterdale Bridge today), ran along what is now River Valley Road, crossed Groat Road through an interchange, and proceeded west through MacKinnon Ravine out to the 100th Avenue corridor.³⁵ In theory, this promised quicker travel for west end residents to both the downtown core and the University area. Roads within ravines were not a new concept to Edmonton. History professor Shannon Stunden Bower notes, Groat Ravine, which saw conversion to a roadway in the mid-1950s proved roads could belong within ravines.³⁶ Today the creek that ran through Groat Ravine is confined to a culvert with any recreational activity constrained to a pathway alongside the road.³⁷ However, the damage proposed by the MacKinnon Ravine project spurred the creation of various citizen groups that spelled the end for *METS*.³⁸

Bower provides a useful overview of the political groups that formed in Edmonton during the late 1960s, such as the rise of groups such as the Save Our Parks Association (SOPA) (1965), and the Urban Reform Group of Edmonton (URGE).³⁹ Such organizations represented a shift away from the politics of the Citizens Committee that firmly gripped Edmonton politics for a

³⁴ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 64.

³⁵ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 2*. Figure 9.

³⁶ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 63.

³⁷ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 63.

³⁸ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 269-70.

³⁹ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 64, 66-67.

thirty-year period during which little citizen organizing amounted to much.⁴⁰ SOPA and URGE were both a response to the destruction that *METS* posed to the river valley in terms of the planned paving of the MacKinnon, Mill Creek, and Capilano ravines.⁴¹ Political scientist James Lightbody goes into more detail on this matter, noting that the conditional granting structure of the day required the city to hold public consultation meetings where this discontent began to rise.⁴² Groups such as SOPA and URGE did make considerable political progress, advancing petitions and even forcing a plebiscite on the Capilano Freeway.⁴³ The plebiscite was passed by 69.7% of Edmontonians, allowing for the paving of the ravine.⁴⁴

URGE represented a shift away from the old municipal politics that characterized Edmonton prior to the 1960s.⁴⁵ In short, for a lengthy period beginning in the 1930s and ending with the first removal of Mayor William Hawrelak from office in 1959, municipal politics were generally controlled by a quasi-political party called the Citizens Committee.⁴⁶ Lightbody argued, "The Citizens Committee in its public policies ran the city as a business and in the interests of the business community."⁴⁷ The Citizens Committee had fallen out of favor by the time *METS* opposition began growing, but its fall represented a major shift in Edmonton municipal politics.⁴⁸ It became clear that Edmontonians were not particularly delighted to see the vast parkland found in the river valley under threat, not from private landowners, but from the

⁴⁰ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 264-68.

⁴¹ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 64; Lightbody, "Edmonton," 270.

⁴² Lightbody, "Edmonton," 269.

⁴³ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 64; Lightbody, "Edmonton," 269-70.

⁴⁴ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 267.

⁴⁵ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 264-68.

⁴⁶ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 262-272.

⁴⁷ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 265.

⁴⁸ Lightbody, "Edmonton," 264.

city itself.⁴⁹ URGE soon picked up seats on City Council and represented a good mobilization of political will.⁵⁰ The threat of losing river valley parkland just happened to be the watershed moment that spurred it into existence.⁵¹

Despite the best efforts of SOPA and URGE, the City was persistent with both its policy of river valley protection and destruction. In terms of destruction, the City undertook numerous attempts at advancing the MacKinnon Ravine freeway, despite officially abandoning *METS* in 1974.⁵² These efforts can be seen in the *West End Corridor Study*, which explored the transportation woes of West Edmonton and presented potential solutions. Mostly it advocated for the continuation of the partially constructed Jasper Freeway.⁵³ If not a freeway, it could simply be another arterial road.⁵⁴ The authors also suggested encouraging employers to stagger the times at which people got off work, eliminate downtown parking incentives for employees, incentivize carpooling and for the city to encourage private industry to construct their offices outside of the downtown core.⁵⁵ Although light rapid (or rail) transit (LRT) was considered in this study, it was thought that LRT would not lead to much difference in traffic patterns by 2001.⁵⁶ This goes against the thought provided in both the 1963 *Bechtel Study* into a rapid transit system for

⁴⁹ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 66.

⁵⁰ Lightbody, "Edmonton". 270.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 68; W. Dave Usher and H. Gerry Wright, *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings Edmonton*. West End Transportation Task Force, 1979. 5.

⁵³ City of Edmonton, *West End Corridor Study*, 30-31.

⁵⁴ City of Edmonton, *West End Corridor Study*, 39; 42-43.

⁵⁵ City of Edmonton, *West End Corridor Study*, 19, 20, 25; Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 148.

⁵⁶ City of Edmonton, *West End Corridor Study*, 50.

Edmonton and the 1972 *University Practicum* into LRT for Edmonton. Both argued that rapid transit, whether LRT or heavy rail, would be a more efficient mode of transportation.⁵⁷

The *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings* mostly expanded upon what can be found in the *Corridor Study* by incorporating public opinion. It details various public hearings that were held in 1978 to make citizens aware of the benefits of the MacKinnon Ravine and the transportation problems that the west end faced.⁵⁸ It is worth mentioning that those who attended the hearings were generally opposed to the thought of constructing the freeway.⁵⁹ Those who were mostly unaware of its more specific details were more likely to support it.⁶⁰ The problem mostly stemmed from the fact that constructing the freeway was not likely to speed up the commute time for most in the west end.⁶¹ The report itself tends to be an inconsistent document as well. At different points, the report claims that citizens both *want* the freeway and are opposed to it.⁶² Again, the concept of LRT is explored with this being a generally supported option by those polled by the task force that published the report.⁶³ Noteworthy is the authors assertion that ravines were mostly useless.⁶⁴ It was thought by placing

⁵⁷ *The University Practicum in Rapid Transit, Fall 1972, Light Rapid Transit: The Immediate Answer for Edmonton*. University of Alberta Department of Extension, 1972. 34-35; Canadian Bechtel Limited. *Rapid Transit for the City of Edmonton* 1963.5. Bechtel envisioned a heavy rail rapid transit system that could carry 50,000 seated passengers per hour. This appears to be the first serious examination, commissioned by the City of Edmonton, into a possible rapid transit system for Edmonton.

⁵⁸ Usher, w. Dave and Gerry H. Wright, *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings Edmonton*. West End Transportation Task Force, 1979. 4-5.

⁵⁹ Usher, w. Dave and Gerry H. Wright, *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings Edmonton*. West End Transportation Task Force, 1979. 39.

⁶⁰ Usher and Wright, *Report on West End Transportation Study*, 39.

⁶¹ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 2*. 131.

⁶² Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 31;68.

⁶³ Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 35-36; 131.

⁶⁴ Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 58.

roads in ravines, what had previously been underutilized, undesirable parkland could see thousands of visitors a day in automobiles.⁶⁵

The City worked diligently to convince those in West Edmonton that the construction of the Jasper Freeway was required to alleviate transportation problems. A shared theme is present in *METS*, the *West End Corridor Study* and the *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings*: Edmonton is going to be gridlocked if these freeways are not constructed.⁶⁶ All of these reports suggest serious congestion in the future. *METS* outlines the traffic problems of the future by predicting traffic patterns of 1980, while the *Corridor Study* claims that by 1976 west Edmonton traffic volumes had already long exceeded *METS* transportation expectations for 1980 with these expected to worsen by 2001.⁶⁷ The public hearings report does admit that construction of these freeways would radically alter the environment in its path.⁶⁸ Once the freeway left the MacKinnon Ravine, an undetermined number of homes along 100th Avenue between 149th and 170th Streets would have faced demolition.⁶⁹ Concerns about increased levels of noise and the dramatic change in the affected neighborhoods were noted in the public hearings as well.⁷⁰

Despite the city continuing discussion around the MacKinnon ravine through the late 1970s, things began to turn in favor of protecting the MacKinnon Ravine in 1972. Construction on the Jasper Freeway came to a sudden stop that year after City Council voted against continued

⁶⁵ Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 104

⁶⁶ Usher, *Report on West End Transportation*. 60; City of Edmonton, *West End Corridor Study*, 5-13.

⁶⁷ Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, *Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study Vol. 1*. 61-63.

Usher, *West End Corridor Study*, 24-25, 2.

⁶⁸ Usher, *West End Corridor Study*, 131.

⁶⁹ Usher, *West End Corridor Study*, 131.

⁷⁰ Usher, *West End Corridor Study*, 132.

construction.⁷¹ The rest of the *METS* plan was canceled two years later in 1974.⁷² Despite the City producing the above reports in favor of the MacKinnon Ravine road, whether a freeway or otherwise, the city eventually decided its best use was as a park.⁷³

Opposition to the *METS* plan meant the city needed a new direction on transportation policy that would not require the destruction of a wide swath of the city at a cost of 750 million, as estimated in 1972.⁷⁴ The 1972 *University Practicum in Rapid Transit* provided the answer. Its fifty pages outline how LRT is not only more efficient, since it can potentially move 20,000 people per hour, but also less costly at roughly 120 million dollars (1972) for the entire proposed 36 station network.⁷⁵ LRT was purported to have a lower environmental impact, both in terms of avoiding the destruction large swaths of the city and having no track-level emissions (since it is electric).⁷⁶ The *Rapid Transit Extension Study* continued this narrative, detailing travel patterns in Edmonton to determine the areas that most needed rapid transit.⁷⁷ The *University Practicum* also noted that while new roads tend to create old problems in terms of becoming gridlocked when their construction was spurred to alleviate gridlock, LRT would keep on giving.⁷⁸ If Edmonton ever grew to such an extent that LRT became insufficient, the system, if designed

⁷¹ City of Edmonton Planning, *West End Corridor Study* (Edmonton: 1978) 1-2.

⁷² Usher and Wright, *Report on West End Transportation Study Public Hearings Edmonton* 5.

⁷³ Bower, "The Affordances of MacKinnon Ravine: Fighting Freeways and Pursuing Government Reform in Edmonton, Alberta," 68-69.

⁷⁴ *The University Practicum in Rapid Transit, Fall 1972, Light Rapid Transit: The Immediate Answer for Edmonton*. University of Alberta Department of Extension, 1972. 27.

⁷⁵ *The University Practicum in Rapid Transit, Fall 1972, Light Rapid Transit: The Immediate Answer for Edmonton*. University of Alberta Department of Extension, 1972. 8, 47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-43

⁷⁷ City of Edmonton, *Rapid Transit Extension Study*, 1977.

⁷⁸ *The University Practicum on Inner City River Valley Land Use, Inner City River Valley Land use: Edmonton*. Department of Extension, University of Alberta, 1975. 36.

correctly, could be converted to a heavy rail system, allowing for the movement of thousands more.⁷⁹

In conclusion, environmental policy regarding protection of the river valley clashed with transportation policy of the period. One branch of the City government hoped to protect the river valley by expanding the types of attractions found in the valley, and through the elimination of “non-viable” neighborhoods since private landowners posed a threat to the protection of the scenery in the valley. Contrary to this, the *METS* plan and related transportation policy called for the paving of the River Valley to alleviate transportation problems of the day while imagining future ones. This not only threatened the environment found in the river valley, but the urban environment found in the rest of the city. Countless homes were under threat of demolition for a freeway system that would have offered marginal gains to the City. To settle many of the concerns that such planning led to, and under pressure from newly formed political groups, City administration settled on a LRT system that balanced protection of the existing natural and urban environments found in Edmonton while hopefully making a dent in the perceived transportation crisis that loomed in the future.

⁷⁹ Department of Extension, University of Alberta, *Summary: Light Rapid Transit: The Immediate Answer for Edmonton, the University Practicum in Rapid Transit*, 1973. 15.

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