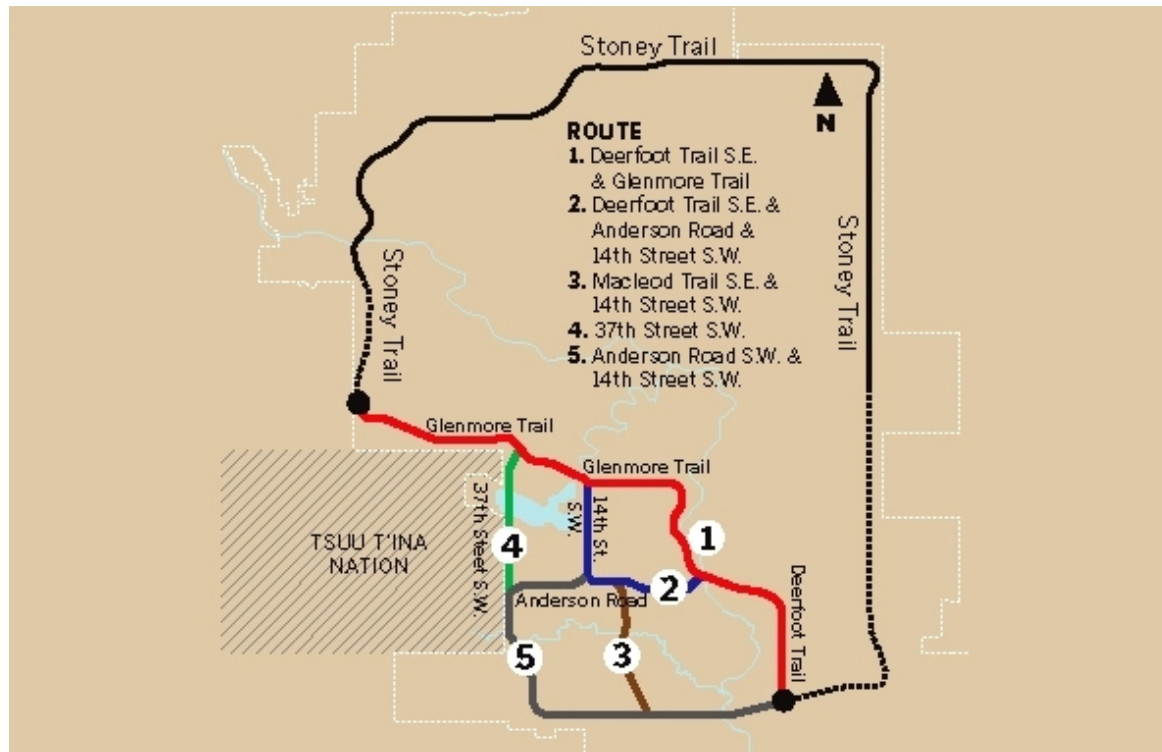


Nenshi looks to Tsuu T'ina for ring road solution

BY RICHARD CUTHBERTSON, CALGARY HERALD FEBRUARY 4, 2011

Presented By:



This map shows the five options being considered for the southwest leg of the Calgary ring road.

Photograph by: Bruce Full, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - As Alberta Transportation begins consulting southwest residents about specific ring road options, one MLA suggests fresh talks between the Tsuu T'ina First nation and the province could be possible this year, if the tribe brings something new to the table.

Both sides have said the door is not shut on negotiations, with Tsuu T'ina's chief suggesting in a statement Thursday they continue to be "open to conversations" on regional transportation.

The ideal route for the southwest ring road is through Tsuu T'ina land, but that option was rejected by band members. But during Calgary's fall election, a number of mayoral candidates raised the possibility of resurrecting negotiations with the tribe.

The city would not be directly involved in any discussions, but Mayor Naheed Nenshi said the five ring road alternatives now being proposed are not appetizing, as he emphasized Thursday his efforts to improve relations between Calgary and the nation.

The province has said it is willing to talk, but only if the Tsuu T'ina come to the table with a new proposal. On Thursday, the MLA with a riding adjacent to the reserve said negotiations are possible.

"I think that there still might be the opportunity for that," Alison Redford said.

But both parties have been down this road before. In 2009, Tsuu T'ina voters rejected a deal with the province that would see them give up 400 hectares of land in exchange for \$275 million and the possibility of 2,000 hectares on the other side of the reserve.

A spokesman for Alberta Transportation said he's not aware of any negotiations, and the province is not looking to refresh any talks.

"If the Tsuu T'ina wanted to present us with an option or an alternative, then we're certainly open to listening to it." Trent Bancarz said.

At a meeting last weekend, community associations learned of five options the province is considering to forge a path for the ring road to the east of the Tsuu T'ina reserve.

Some use 14th Street and Anderson Trail, another Glenmore Trail. They cut various paths across the southwest, but with each, the province notes at least one unfavourable aspect.

The one likely most in play is along 37th Street and across the Weaselhead. Analysis by the province shows it is the most palatable, except for the environmental concerns.

Aldermen Peter Demong and Diane Colley-Urquhart believe this is the best way.

"Most of the traffic that's going through my ward is trying to get to Deerfoot, which is a parking lot already," Demong said. "To get the southwest ring road up and running as quickly as possible is of vital importance."

But that's just the option opposed by the residents of Lakeview; they worry hundreds of homes could be lost to make way for a freeway running up against their community.

To the north, Ald. Richard Pootmans is also against this particular option.

"I hope that we can open negotiations with the Tsuu T'ina," he said. "I think, however, it's very important that we also have other alternatives and options. Clearly we now have other options."

Nenshi said nothing looks good.

He said he's working to better relations with Tsuu T'ina on a variety of issues.

That relationship was strained under his predecessor, Dave Bronconnier. In a statement, Tsuu T'ina

Chief Sandford Big Plume said relations with Nenshi are much better than they were under the previous administration.

"This mayor has made a real effort to build bridges and get to work on issues of mutual concern," Big Plume said.

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