

Roadblocks won't stop Bronco

Mayor wants to go ahead with interchange at Glenmore Tr. and 37 St. S.W. regardless of province's plans

By RICK BELL

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Mayor Dave Bronconnier. (Sun Media File Photo)

The city is in high gear even if the province still sits in park.

Mayor Bronco says the city will begin construction of an interchange at 37 St. S.W. and Glenmore Tr. in the spring, along with a widening of Glenmore from that interchange to Crowchild Tr., if council gives the green light to a Sept. 14 report by their paper shufflers.

In fact, if all goes according to the script, on the morning of Sept. 15, city crews will start putting in a temporary scheme to make turning easier through the troubled intersection at 37 St.

That being said, there is, for the moment, a big bump in the road.

The city's pitch to the province, the other and larger part of a Plan B to make traffic flow better in the southwest after the death of any ring road deal with the Tsuu T'ina, isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Rewind. Back in July, Bronco sends a brainwave to the deep thinkers in Edmonton.

He proposes the city do what they're doing and Premier Ed's folks build the west stretch of the ring road from Canada Olympic Park to the Discovery Ridge area.

The province would also widen and upgrade Hwy. 8 and Glenmore going east to the city-built interchange. Road meets road.

There would be no need to touch the Weaselhead or blow out all kinds of houses in Lakeview.

It wouldn't technically be a ring road, but the city figures it will help with almost all of today's traffic headaches.

This past summer, Luke Ouellette, the province's poobah of pavement, says he likes what he sees from Bronco but he has to talk to his guys and, when a politician talks to his pencil pushers, the little minions usually put up more roadblocks than the hardhats working on 16 Ave. N.

Still, the weeks go by and the news sounds great. Then it doesn't.

A wise man speaks to the scribe. He says wheels are turning.

On a scale of one to 10, with ten meaning a go signal from Ed's outfit, it's an eight with an up arrow.

It sort of makes sense. Let's be frank. There is a ballot battle in the southwest the very same day the interchange goes to council. Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart is running for Team Ed and some positive news about the crazy traffic in Big Red's neck of the woods wouldn't hurt when people put their X on the spot.

Anyway, yesterday, a wise man equal to the first, this one from the premier's office, sets the excited scribe straight. It isn't an eight out of 10 and there is no arrow.

To-and-fro between the sides is happening but it's not time to uncork the bubbly or even head to the liquor store or even start up the truck. The premier's man says ground needs covering, issues have to be worked on. Bottom line? Nothing is going on in the near future.

Bronco soldiers on. It isn't the first time. For now, it's nicey-nicey but storm clouds are in the distance if this plan goes sideways.

"We're moving full steam ahead for the Sept. 14 council meeting, which will have a very clear direction on short-term and medium-term improvements," says the mayor.

"Our priority right now is to improve this congestion problem for the residents of Calgary. There is no doubt 37 St. and Glenmore is a failure. We've spent 40 years of anticipation and five years of negotiation on the southwest ring road to get an answer that's no. This may not be the perfect solution but the perfect solution is not on the table. It will get us 90% of the way."

Alison Redford, the justice minister who represents a southwest city riding, pushes for a Plan B and says there is no way to turn back. Literally.

Can you imagine what happens if the city has a 37 St. interchange and wide pavement going east but not going west, on the province's side of the roadway? Rage is a four-letter word.

But can Alison, one hell of a voice at the cabinet table, talk sense to the others?

The clock ticks.

"It's time for Calgary to move forward. We are moving forward to achieve Calgary's ring road network," says Bronco, having no clue when or if Ed will become part of the "we."

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