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Silly Hall's Bermuda Triangle of politics conjures one clear mental image: The Simpsons cartoon conman Lyle Lanley pitching monorail

By RICK BELL

You know it's business as the usual unusual at Silly Hall when aldermen exhale for hours on end and all you can think of is an episode of The Simpsons.

Yes indeed, the picture of huckstering Lyle Lanley, the conman pitching a monorail, creeps into the cranium when the first day after a week off is a trip back into the Bermuda Triangle of politics.

"A town with money is like a mule with a spinning wheel. No one knows how he got it and danged if he knows how to use it," says the smooth-talking cartoon shyster, as if he's spent some time in our particular barrel of laughs.

And here we are. More wagging of chins on the west leg of the LRT by a committee of aldermen, trying to pacify the peeved off.

Peeved off? Bronco goes to war with Premier Ed to get the west leg. He's ballistic when Ed short-changes him and becomes a weapon of mass instruction sending a letter to all Calgarians telling us the beloved west leg of the LRT will be put on hold. No Eddie Money, no tickets to paradise.

Ed eventually caves and Bronco runs for re-election promising to build that west leg of the LRT and take it right into his neck of the woods.

"This is not the time to be timid," he implores, budgeting a cool \$700 million for the project.

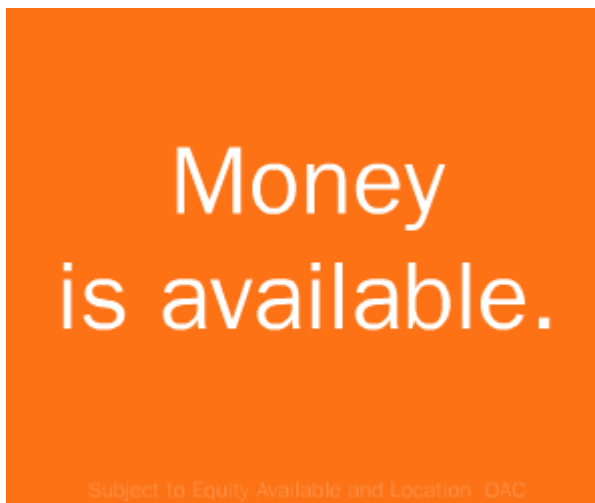
But those in the west complain. They don't like how the track will run. They want this change and they want that change. It's like getting free Flames tickets and then not liking the seats.

They didn't fight for the LRT loot and they don't give two hoots about what goes on in this city until the shadow of Silly Hall appears over their pretty patch of grass. Oh my, then it's battle stations.

Of course, since everyone in the rest of the city has to fight their own me-myself-and-I missions, the west siders are never going to get what they want. It's mostly a done deal except, in true municipal fashion, it takes twice as long as the Russian movie version of War and Peace to get there.

Ald. John Mar, representing Sunalta and the areas in the east part of the west LRT, puts forward proposal after proposal. One instructs city paper-shufflers to give aldermen an answer they've already been given. One instructs them to do what can't be done. Another amounts to a redesign of the LRT line and gets nowhere, except for one little part of the

http://calsun.canoe.ca/News/Columnists/Bell_Rick/2008/05/28/pf-5691171.html



Rundle Ray Jones, the member of council who is often a voice of uncommon common sense, urges one and all to get on with it and stop "debating around in circles."

Doesn't Ray know? Silly Hall wouldn't be silly if debate didn't go around the municipal merry-go-round.

Ald. Gord (Just The Facts) Lowe is upset. Don't these people want the LRT?

"It's been beaten to death," says Gord, apparently forgetting no council mouth marathon would be complete until every idea has been squeezed out of any sense it could possibly have. "I'm seeing all kinds of political nonsense. We're off on a tangent," says Gord. And the point is?

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart insists the aldermen must make a decision. She later utters the second-place head-scratcher of the day.

"This is where the rubber meets the sky," she says. Huh.

Ald. Ric McIver, better known as Dr. No but willing to vote Yes while pushing for an LRT line in the less whiny southeast, says it's time to "fish or cut bait."

He utters the first-place head-scratcher of the day.

"This is like wetting yourself while sitting in a puddle." Don't ask.

A plan to consult residents about how they should be consulted is passed after much consultation.

"Are we having fun yet?" asks Mar. It isn't funny.

Ald. Druh Farrell, the latte-lifting Queen of Kensington, waxes poetic about some public toilet in Berlin turned into an eatery. The remark has little to do with anything but since when did that restriction stop anybody.

Ald. Joe Connelly, of the west part of the west leg of the LRT, actually has a solid idea to discuss, running the track underground at 17 Ave. and 45 St. S.W. but only to Sunterra Market, for the time being. His brainwave is bounced as out of order but Joe vows to fight on.

At this point, one fellow in the crowd, no doubt miffed he missed his squash date at the Glencoe, flips through listings of luxury homes in locales far from an LRT.

In case you didn't know, Mayor Bronco, who usually sits in the high chair for these adventures in governing, is absent, since he owns property in the vicinity.

Mercifully, the credits roll. There is a concession, more base hit than homer. A piece of elevated track is tossed from city plans and the line will run in the Bow Tr. median. The design goes back to the full council next month for a thumbs-up. Oh joy. More mules on the spinning wheel.