



WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT WOOD BUFFALO WAY DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

*Engineering Department
August 21 – September 11, 2023*

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We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional and ancestral lands of the Cree, Dene, and unceded territory of the Métis.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Municipality is in the design stage to complete some overland drainage improvements and spot repairs on the pavement along Wood Buffalo Way in Thickwood.

This work is part of Phase 3 of the Urban Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (UIRP). The overall objective of UIRP is to identify roads and underground utilities in need of rehabilitation.

There are two objectives for this engagement: 1) inform residents about the upcoming work and how it may impact their property (and the Right-of-Way adjacent to their property), and 2) get feedback from residents and property owners to learn about their experiences with overland drainage along Wood Buffalo Way.

Once designs are complete, the Municipality will go through the budget request process, and if approved, hire a contractor to make drainage improvements along Wood Buffalo Way. This project is currently in the design phase with construction anticipated for 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From August 21 until September 11, 2023, residents of Wood Buffalo Way were invited to share their feedback online or in person at two public engagement sessions that were hosted in the community on September 6 and 7. The online portion of the engagement was hosted on [Participate Wood Buffalo](#), and residents were invited to take a short survey or point out their feedback using the Map Tool, which allows participants to point out specific locations and provide comments.

At the in-person engagements, residents were invited to “meet on the street” and speak with municipal staff from Engineering, Public Works and Public Engagement, and the consultants who are developing the design for the project. Residents shared their experiences, asked questions, and walked around the neighbourhood pointing out and discussing their experiences with overland drainage along Wood Buffalo Way.

Residents’ feedback from the engagement has been provided to the consultant, who is taking this information into consideration to create a design solution that will enhance overland drainage in the neighbourhood.

ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS

Residents and property owners along Wood Buffalo Way.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The following is a list of ways that this engagement opportunity was advertised to stakeholders and potential participants along Wood Buffalo Way.

- ✓ Electronic message boards
- ✓ In-person conversations
- ✓ Posters at mailbox area
- ✓ Printed invitations dropped off at residents’ door
- ✓ Participate Wood Buffalo Newsletter

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS



- Two in-person engagement events.
- Online survey (available in print or through Pulse phone support).
- Online Map Tool to point out areas of interest and share feedback and experiences.
- One-on-one dialogue with the Project Manager and consultants.



ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

Meaningful in-person analytics



Meaningful online analytics



KEY FINDINGS/THEMES

Results from engagement confirmed themes that are important to residents of Wood Buffalo Way. While the project team did have some of these themes in mind, conversations with residents helped to provide more detail, specific locations, and trends with respect to culverts freezing, dips in the road, water flow/path and pooling.



CULVERTS



DIPS IN ROAD



DRIVEWAYS



LANDSCAPING & TREES



WATER FLOW



WATER POOLING

Feedback also helped identify areas of importance for when construction work begins. Residents told us that they were concerned about their driveways, trees and landscaping, and how construction might impact those areas.

Following are the key themes further explored within in this report, based on feedback from the August/September 2023 engagement.

DETAILED ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

Following a three-week engagement about the design of drainage improvements for Wood Buffalo Way, engagement findings have been gathered and are reviewed below in detail. This information includes feedback from the in-person engagement sessions held on September 6 and 7, and an online survey and map tool that were available from August 21 until September 11, 2023.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey for this project was designed to allow for participants to share their experiences with overland drainage along Wood Buffalo Way – what happens with water after a rain event or snow thaw. This feedback will help consultants hired by the Municipality to design the drainage improvements.

Some of the improvements the Municipality is considering are located on the public road Right-of-Way (ROW) adjacent to residents' property and driveway. This survey was also designed to inform Wood Buffalo Way residents about work being planned for the area and to start a dialogue about individual driveways and ditches.

Construction will include making spot repairs to the road surface, in addition, plans include modifying ditch lines to improve drainage, repositioning culverts where necessary, and changing surface materials in key locations. In some cases, driveways may be disturbed to replace culverts at new elevations to promote drainage.

Informing residents about how work may potentially impact them is an important step to minimize construction impacts and inconveniences, avoid misunderstandings, and help facilitate construction, so it can be done quickly and effectively.

Nine visitors viewed the FAQs to learn more, while another four visitors viewed the map of the project area.

In total, 13 surveys were completed, and two pins/comments were placed on the map tool, for a total of 15 responses through the online platform. In addition, we spoke with 28 people from 18 residences during two nights of in-person engagements. Keeping in mind that some residents who attended the in-person sessions also completed the survey online, we received contact information for 20 residences. Based on this metric, we estimate that we connected with participants from 20 of the 35 residences along Wood Buffalo Way.



ABOUT THE IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENTS

Residents of Wood Buffalo Way were invited to drop in at two in-person engagements. An engagement site was set up along Wood Buffalo Way at the mailboxes, as it would be a central location for the neighbourhood – and also on public property. The location was also situated near the entrance to the neighbourhood, so it would be hard for residents to miss us. They could drop in for a chat while picking up their mail, or while on their way home.

Themes discussed at the in-person engagements are consistent with the themes found in the survey responses.

See below to learn about common themes we heard.

Throughout the two nights of engagement, 28 people from the neighbourhood visited to talk about the project. Municipal staff from Engineering, Public Works and Public Engagement were on-hand at the engagement sessions. In addition, two consultants hired to develop the design solution for drainage in the neighbourhood were at the sessions.

Residents from the neighbourhood visited the engagement site to ask questions, find out next steps, tell us about their experiences and ideas, and share their contact information to stay in touch. In addition, some residents went with municipal staff to specific locations to point out their feedback and share ideas.

The consultants brought with them some maps and preliminary sketches to point out details and make notes for specific locations. We also recorded feedback and ideas to help inform the design and understand common themes from the conversations.

COMMON THEMES WE HEARD

CULVERTS



Some participants told us that they are experiencing blockages in their culverts, and some culverts are either poorly positioned or buried completely. In some locations, frozen water and other debris blocks their culverts, preventing water from flowing and draining properly. Blocked culverts can cause water to move towards some homes and create a risk of flooding basements. Some residents call the municipality to steam out or clean the culverts, while other residents clear out their culverts themselves.

It's important to note that not all residents reported issues with their culverts. One survey respondent wrote this: "I have lived here for 10 years, and we have never had issues in either of our two ditches. One of our ditches has 3 culverts... Zero issues in all those years."

DIPS IN ROAD



During our conversations, some participants pointed out the dips in the road. Other people noted that the road is mostly in good condition, except for the problematic dips. They also mentioned that there has been some work on those dips in the past, but the dips continue to grow and are increasingly problematic for drivability.



Some residents asked if there are plans to resurface the entire road, while others felt that the road was fine and that tax dollars could be better used elsewhere. As part of our conversations, it was clarified that only spot road repairs would be part of the design. There are no plans to resurface the entire road.

DRIVEWAYS



Some participants reported culverts under their driveways or that their culverts are pushing up (heaving) their driveways. Other participants had concerns about construction, because they had recently invested in a new or refinished driveway.

Some people reported having no issues with their driveway and ditch, yet they were concerned that construction work would impact their driveway and cause issues in the future. One resident asked about plans for on-street parking for those who might have limited access to their driveway during construction.

TREES & LANDSCAPING



As part of the survey, participants were asked if they had done any landscaping or modifications in their driveway or ditch. Three survey respondents reported making landscaping improvements, including trees, gravel, rock, steel plates, weeping tile, and grading adjustments. Additional landscaping improvements were noted in our conversations with residents and through observation at in the neighbourhood.

More than one participant noted trees. One participant complained that trees were causing drainage issues on their property and wished for them to be removed, while other participants were concerned that their trees may be impacted by construction and would like them to remain in place.

We also discussed rock placement along the side of the road and how this can have impacts on snow plowing services, as the rocks can damage equipment. Residents noted the placement of rocks were to discourage vehicles from driving on their property.

WATER FLOW



During our conversations, some residents reported that “the water flows wonderfully,” while others suggest ideal water flow only happens after culverts have been cleared.

A common theme of discussion was how landscaping and grading has impacted water flow in some areas for the better, and other areas remain problematic. Several residents reported that water has been known to flow across the road and collect in low areas and near the intersection.

WATER POOLING



Some respondents reported pooling and standing water, which can result in bull rushes (cat tails) growing in the ditches and an increased presence of mosquitos. With water pooling and building up, this can create a risk of flooding some basements. The standing water also creates a hazard for kids playing in the neighbourhood.

Others reported that water pooling needs to be pumped out, or the water eventually evaporates during long periods of dry weather.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

From August 21 until September 11, 2023, residents and property owners of Wood Buffalo Way were invited to participate by learning more about the project, completing a short survey, or using a map tool to point out their experiences with overland drainage in their neighbourhood.

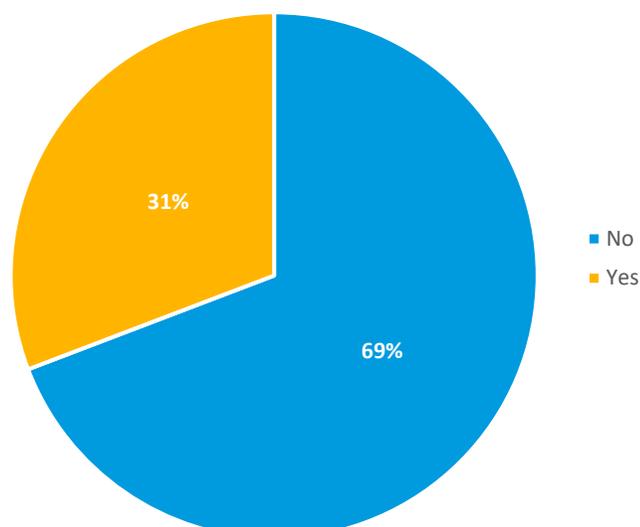
On September 6 and 7, municipal staff set up an opportunity to “meet on the street” with residents of Wood Buffalo Way. Conversations during these sessions were tailored to be parallel to the questions asked in the survey. A summary of common themes and feedback can be found above.

The following is a summary of online survey responses, which is also consistent with the trends that were found during the in-person conversations.

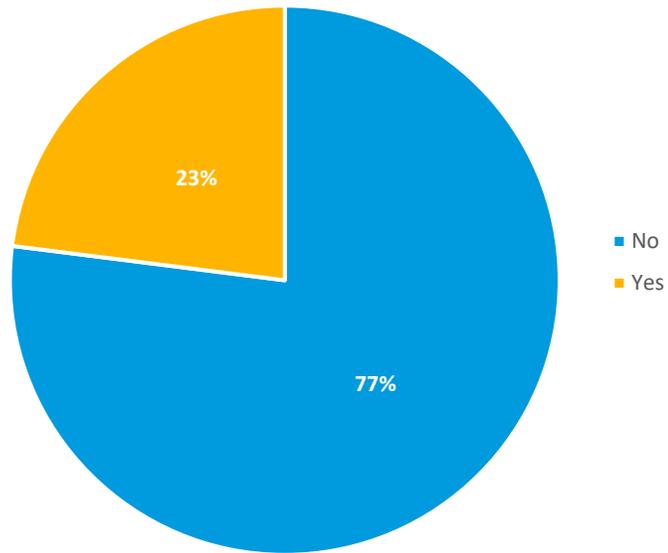
Q1: What is your street address?

This was an important question to understand the context of the survey respondent’s feedback – i.e., where the respondent is referring to in their responses to other questions in the survey. As this information is private, it will not be shared in this report. Any contact information collected during this engagement was done so under the authority of section 33(c) of Alberta’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

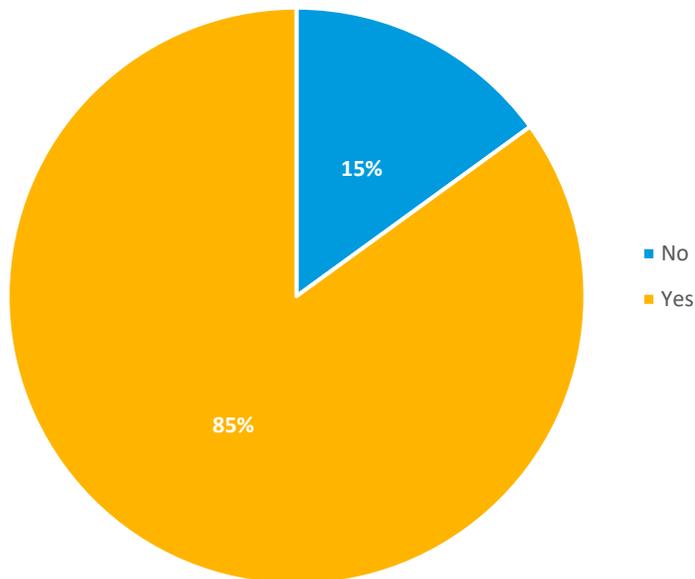
Q2: Are you experiencing drainage issues in your driveway or front yard drainage ditch?



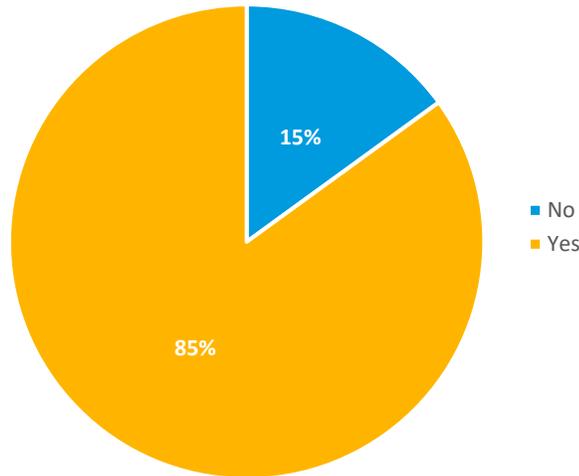
Q3: Have you done any landscaping or modifications in your driveway or front yard drainage ditch?



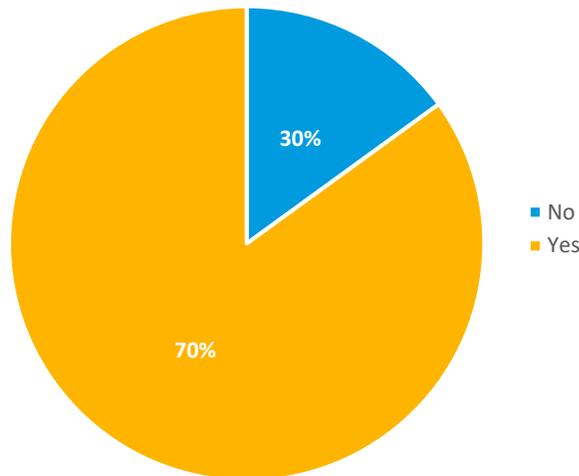
Q4: Did you know that there is a municipal right-of-way or easement where the drainage ditches are located?



Q5: Would you like to share any additional information?



Q6: Would you like us to contact you about this project?



NEXT STEPS

Engagement findings will be reviewed and considered by the project team as they develop the design for drainage improvements. Construction for this project is anticipated (though not guaranteed) for the 2024 construction season. We will be following up with those of you who have requested us to contact you and will provide further updates as they are available. Stay up to date on the progress of this project by subscribing to participate.rmwb.ca/wood-buffalo-way-drainage-improvements.

We encourage you to continue using your voice to make our region even better by learning about all current projects. Visit participate.rmwb.ca to stay connected. Thank you for participating.



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