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The Impact of the Green Line on Real Estate Values (2024)

By Eddie Kamps

The proposed Green Line project is one of the most important civil infrastructure projects undertaken by the City of Calgary in recent memory. The project will see a greenfield LRT/C-Train line constructed from downtown north along Centre Street to the Coventry Hills area and south east through Inglewood/Ramsay connecting to Quarry Park, the communities in the southeast, and Seton. The city sees this not merely as another means to move Calgarians from place to place, but the catalyst to fundamentally re-imagine the cities geography centered on public transit. However, the project has been beset by scope and cost issues, which have thrown the future of it in doubt. This publication will discuss the Green Line, the issues it currently faces, and their implications for real estate investors.

Background

The Green Line is one of the most significant civic infrastructure projects in the history of Calgary. The full vision of the Green Line sees an LRT line connecting Calgarian from Seton to communities north of Stoney Trail. Once completely built, the Green Line will serve 27 communities with 29 stations with 200,000-240,000 trips per day. The City of Calgary estimates that 250,000 transit riders will live within 10 minutes of a Green Line station. In contrast to the current Red and Blue lines, the Green Line will utilize low floor light rail vehicles for easier access. The Green Line will be built in stages due to fiscal constraints. As of fall 2024, the preliminary works and supporting projects were underway but have since been put on hold or wound up due to political and fiscal uncertainty.

Green Line Map

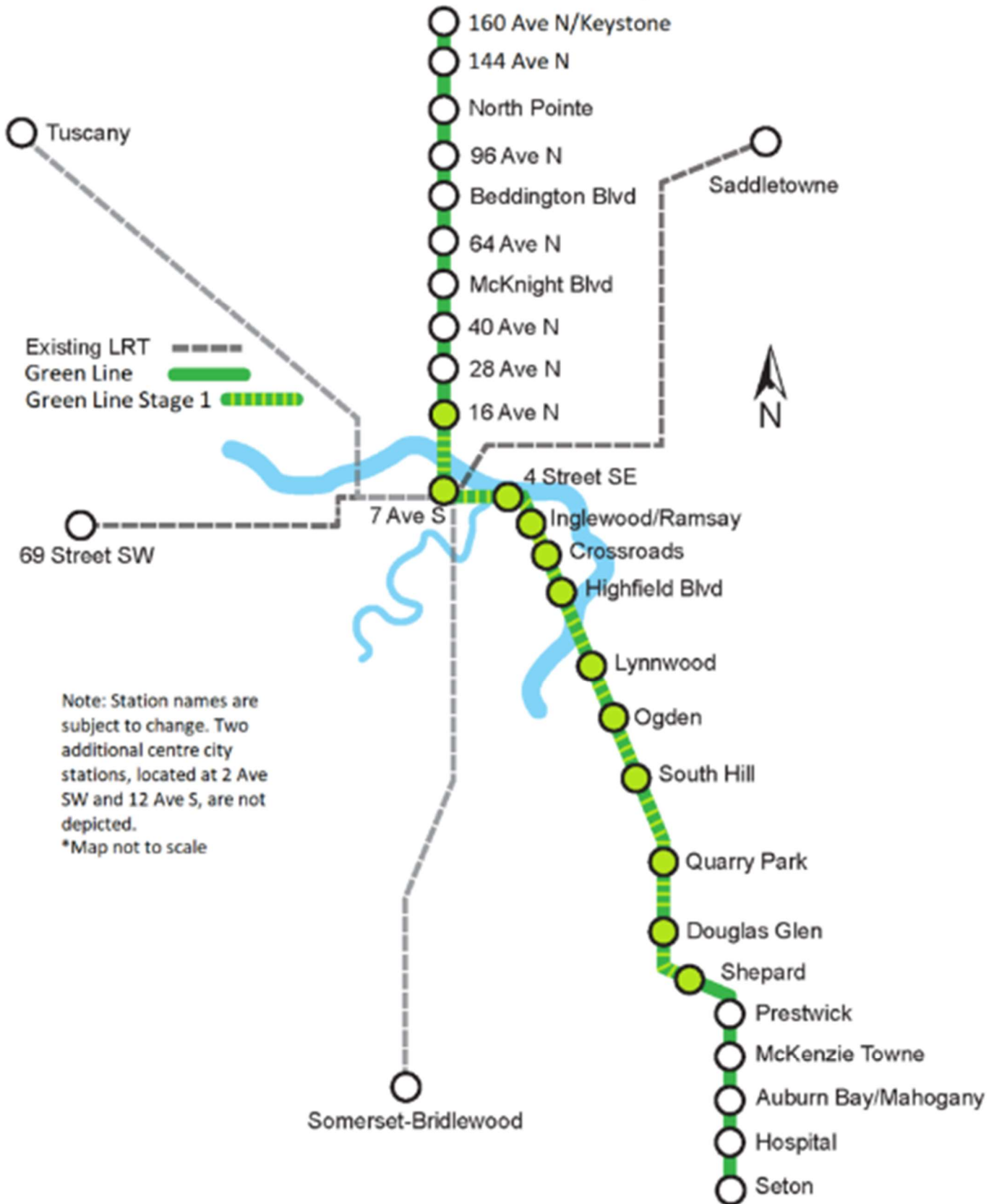


Image 1: Green Line Stage 1 alignment in May 2017

Source: City of Calgary

Political Positions

The positions of the City of Calgary and the Province of Alberta are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Political Positions Affecting the Green Line

	City of Calgary	Province of Alberta
Summary	"Build the Green Line shorter now if we must so we can tunnel through downtown"	"Tunnelling through downtown is technically and financially risky. The Green Line must be sufficiently long to reach enough commuters in the first Stage"
Priority	Building the "final version" of the Green Line through downtown to avoid future tunnelling scope	Financial viability and track length for Stage 1. Sufficient ridership must be achieved with Stage 1 and the initial capital funding to justify the investment
Secondary Priority	Extending the track as far to the southeast as possible while increasing the budget to the point of the City of Calgary's fiscal capacity	Connecting the Green Line to the Red and Blue Lines and future intercity rail lines
Sacrificial Priority	Operating costs of the Green Line after Stage 1 completion and subsequent capital costs to complete the scope of the Green Line	Future capital costs to tunnel downtown should Calgary reach sufficient size to make existing at-grade lines underground
Proposed Downtown Configuration	Underground	At grade or elevated
Stage 1 Scope	Eau Claire to Millican	Eau Claire to Shepard at a minimum

Timeline

- May 2017 - Green Line LRT report issued. The Building the Core report established 126 Avenue S.E. to 16 Avenue N. as Stage 1
- June 2017 – Council approved Green Line LRT alignment and stations (160 Avenue N. to Seton)
- July 2017 – Government of Alberta announced \$1.54B funding commitment
- May 2018 – Government of Canada announced \$1.53B funding commitment
- January 2019 – Funding agreement signed by the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta and The City of Calgary
- June 2020 – Council approved the updated Stage 1 alignment to include a bridge over the Bow River from a tunnel; Government of Alberta approves
- January 2021 – Green Line Board appointed to oversee the project
- June 2021 – Following an extensive review of the overall Green Line LRT project, the Government of Alberta approved the redefined procurement strategy and federal funding business case that was submitted to the province on May 28, 2021. The Green Line will be constructed through a new phased approach, with the first phase building the LRT from Shepard to Eau Claire
- July 2021 – Federal Government support announcement. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reconfirmed federal support of the Green Line LRT project and the redefined procurement strategy at an announcement in Calgary along with the Mayor and members of Calgary City Council
- August 2021 – The Green Line Board appointed Darshpreet Bhatti as CEO of the Green Line LRT project effective August 16, 2021
- March 2022 – Green Line scope shortened to Eau Claire to Shepard
- April 2023 – Bow Transit Connectors (BTC) selected as the Green Line’s Development Partner
- March 2024 – City Council warned about escalating costs; Darshpreet Bhatti stated the Green Line’s budget was determined before COVID and the project will be impacted by inflationary pressures
- July 2024 – Green Line approved with revised Phase 1 scope, budget and delivery model with construction limited from Eau Claire to Millican/Ogden, eliminating 5 stations from the latest scope. Any future extensions north or south, will proceed when additional funding is in place. The Government of Alberta casts serious doubt about their support for the Green Line
- September 2024 – City Council decided to wind down work on the Green Line project at a cost of \$850 million, bringing the total cost of the project to more than \$2 billion. Both levels of government commit to working on the Green Line with a mutually acceptable budget and scope
- October 2024 – Darshpreet Bhatti announces his resignation

Scope of Study

This study examines the impacts of the Green Line and its effect on real estate values. The scope includes the following:

City of Calgary Publications:

- Municipal Development Plan
- Calgary Transportation Plan
- Route Ahead
- Area Redevelopment Plans
- Civic Census

Neighbourhood Analysis:

- Household average and median income
- Macroeconomic impacts and connectivity of key employment nodes
- Land use and residential construction types
- Amenities and proximity to services
- Investment strategy and highest and best use of land

Other Resources:

- Statistics from the Calgary Real Estate Board (CREB)
- The Impact of New LRT Stations on Residential Property Sales Prices in Calgary. Laura Dick, 2015

Key Factors

The future of the Green Line and the returns to investors will be determined by many factors. With so much uncertainty at the present time, it is difficult to surmise what the Stage 1 scope and timeline of the project will be. However, the key issues that will impact a real estate investor's decision-making are:

- Stage 1 Alignment and Scope – the City and Province want to minimize losses from cancelled work and contracts and proceed with the project, but the scope for Stage 1 is highly contentious. According to a September 2024 CTV News article, both parties are in agreement as to the alignment south of downtown; the major point of disagreement is the path through downtown. The City prefers an underground route, minimizing impact to traffic and pedestrians at grade. The Province has balked at this decision due to the cost, particularly in light of groundwater flow in downtown

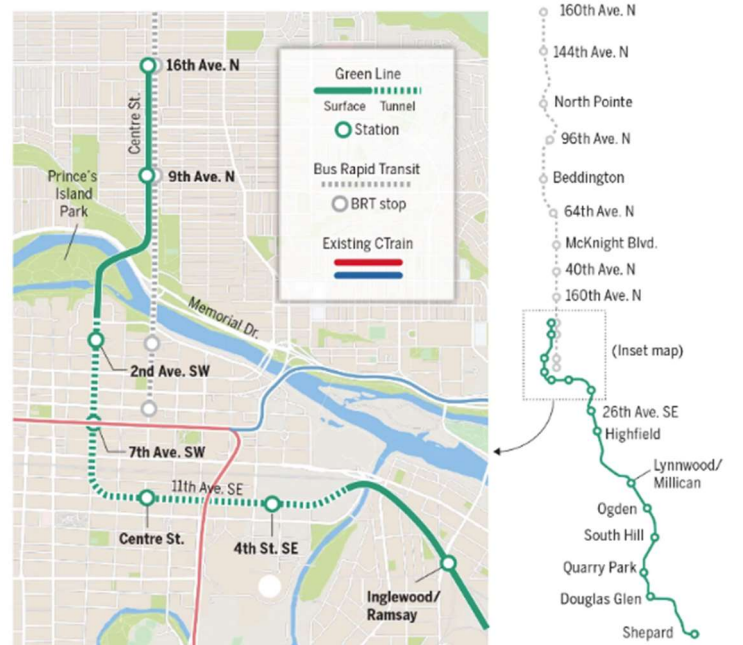
- Updated Timeline – until the issue of downtown alignment is resolved and a scope agreed upon, the timeline for completion of Stage 1 is undetermined. The Province has promised an update in December 2024
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) – housing is a frequently discussed issue at the federal level as Canada is enduring an affordability crisis. While each of the three major parties have their own diagnosis and prescription to alleviate the problem, all three agree that TOD is a major part of the solution and would be encouraged under any future federal political arrangement
- Land Use Bylaw (LUB)/Blanket Upzoning – the City of Calgary passed in the summer of 2024 sweeping amendments to the LUB, permitting much denser build forms outside of the downtown core
- UCP Commuter Rail Plan – the UCP/Province of Alberta has commenced a comprehensive study regarding inter-city commuter rail, including:
 - Calgary-Edmonton
 - Calgary Airport to Downtown Calgary
 - Calgary to Banff National Park
 - Regional transit connections to Airdrie and Okotoks

The study from a third-party engineering firm is due in the summer of 2025. Observers have contended that a key issue is integrating the Green Line with these commuter rail scopes and the creation of a 'grand central station' near the Stampede Grounds

- Calgary Event Centre (CEC) – the CEC, also known as Scotia Place or the new Flames arena, is under construction with an estimated completion date in time for the 2027/28 Flames season
- Civic Elections in 2025 – Mayor Jyoti Gondek and a left-leaning City Council are up for re-election in October 2025. Premier Smith has passed legislation permitting political parties at the municipal level, contending that unions declaring and funding candidates have effectively created a municipal party whereas critics chide the move as being unnecessarily divisive. The election is too far in the future to draw any conclusions but mayoral candidates must stake their position on the Green Line and the winner could affect the project

GREEN LINE, PHASE ONE

CTrain would run from Shepard in the south to 16th Avenue in the north. Most of the downtown route would be underground, with a bridge over Prince's Island Park. BRT improvements will be made from downtown to 160th Ave. N.



SOURCE: CITY OF CALGARY

DARREN FRANCEY / POSTMEDIA

Image 1: Green Line (Phase 1) Stage 1 Downtown alignment in May 2017

Source: Postmedia

Impact Analysis

Investing in real estate along a major civil infrastructure project such as the Green Line can yield substantial returns. Laura Dick's paper *The Impact of New LRT Stations on Residential Property Sales Prices in Calgary* concludes "that in general, property values within 2000 m of a new station experienced an increase in value of approximately 1% to 5% after the station commenced operations, compared to properties more than 2000 m away from a station. The increases in value were largest for the group of properties closest to the station (i.e., within 500 m), as long as increases in crime level related to the new stations is included as a control variable. Increases in value are found to differ by property type and whether the neighbourhood is low or high income."

The examination of her peer-reviewed sources and several real estate seminars the author has attended concurs with Dick's conclusion. In one particular seminar in 2016, a speaker was presenting his analysis of the impact of the C-Train expansion west from downtown to 69 Avenue. In six neighbourhoods along the C-Train route, the change from the 2005 to the 2015 house prices resulted in a Return on Investment (ROI) of 13%-33%. Assuming a buyer put 20% down, the return on cash invested (or Return on Equity - ROE) was 72%-246%. This occurred because properties along the route became more connected to downtown as commuters had more options to get to and from work. C-Train connectivity turns car commuters into transit users, thereby saving on downtown parking rates and making life more convenient. On a macro-scale, the C-Train served as a catalyst for infill developments, which further drove up property prices.

The most important question to be answered is: where and when does one invest? The Green Line will run from the very north to the extreme south of Calgary, running through numerous and diverse neighbourhoods, although the build-out and timelines for completion are ambiguous. A buyer or investor has many options from which to choose.

I've recently completed a detailed analysis on the impacts of the Green Line and its effect on real estate values. The scope of the analysis of each neighbourhood along the likely route consisted of:

- Household average and median income
- Macroeconomic impacts and connectivity of key employment nodes
- Amenities, proximity to services, zoning, and construction type
- Investment strategy and highest and best use of land

Suitability for real estate investment is calculated on the following assumptions and factors:

- Neighbourhoods with household income close to the city average or median will see higher appreciation than those with significantly higher incomes
- Current or short-term future purchase prices must be relatively low and within reach of the average, motivated Calgarian
- More options and shorter trip durations to employment nodes are desirable
- The difference between current use and highest and best use of the land will yield higher returns

Investment Considerations

Investment considerations are specific to the individual or company when contemplating an investment decision. However, most individual investors should consider the following factors, generally in descending order of importance:

- Investment Objective – a real estate investor should be clear on what they are trying to achieve with a property acquisition and how it fits into their broader investment portfolio
- Maximum Purchase Price – the most an investor can contribute to a down payment and closing costs
- Property Risk – risk tolerance pertaining to costs of unforeseen repairs and poor tenants
- Time Horizon – Stage 1 of the Green Line will be known in late 2024 or early 2025. Completion dates for further stages are purely speculative. Investors should match their investment horizon to the anticipated completion date of the Stage on which they will invest
- Proximity and Property Management – if their investment property will be self-managed, investors must factor the proximity from their home to their investment property to address repairs, inspection, and tenant acquisition. If hiring a property management company, the fees must be included in expenses and return calculations
- Other factors – any factors not covered previously and that are specific to the investor or property

Conclusions

The primary conclusions of the study are:

- Returns - I expect real estate values to appreciate up to 30% in key neighbourhoods after completion. These returns will not be evenly distributed among property types, locations within the neighbourhood, and over the timeline of the project. The properties that will achieve the highest returns will be located within 600 m of a future LRT station and in neighbourhoods characterized by lower and middle class demographics
- Alignment – it is likely that the scope of Stage 1 will extend to at least Shepard with a more cost-effective alignment through downtown to Eau Claire
- Land Use – since the passage of the revised LUB/blanket upzoning, Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) will matter less but the land use provisions for TOD will be of much greater importance. More emphasis needs to be placed on examining the annual capital budget in determining the City's priorities for redevelopment
- Future Stages – the next stage to be completed will extend the Green Line south from Shepard to Seton. Although the City of Calgary has not made any statements to this effect, an extension south is the most probable next stage because:

- Most levels of government in Canada, including the City of Calgary, will continue to pursue expansionary fiscal policies and will be eager to fund infrastructure projects to remove cars from the road and contribute towards climate objectives
- A south extension compared to an extension from 16 Ave N to North Pointe is shorter, has fewer stations, and fewer technical issues (signalling along Centre St)
- The economics of a south extension are favourable as it will connect the South Health Campus (SHC), a major activity centre, to the LRT network and will bring strong incremental ridership from communities from the southern terminus of Stage 1 to Seton
- The capital cost of crossing the Bow River north of Eau Claire

Next Steps

I expect real estate values to appreciate approximately 30% in key neighbourhoods after construction completion. However, these returns will not be evenly distributed among property types, locations within the neighbourhood, and over the timeline of the project. Furthermore, the proper investment strategy also depends on the resources and risk tolerance of the investor.

A cogent investment strategy is initially buy and hold and decide upon the most profitable course of action when an area undergoes redevelopment. Upon reaching this milestone, an investor must decide whether to sell the property to a developer or redevelop the land themselves. A more conservative strategy would be to buy a newer, cash-flowing property and reap the rewards of capital appreciation or higher rents after the Green Line is completed.

After you have verified the information and logic in this publication and determined and prioritized your individual investment considerations, contact me should you have interest in taking advantage of an investment in a property along the Green Line. There are numerous factors that I have not covered in this publication for brevity and that should be taken into account when searching for and deciding on an investment property.

Disclaimer

Real estate investing is inherently risky. Real estate returns are not guaranteed and are determined by numerous factors. Extensive research is required before investing in real estate and due diligence is incumbent upon the investor. Consult the necessary professionals before undertaking investment.

About

I am a full-service realtor serving the buying and selling needs of primarily residential customers in the Calgary area since 2016, with a focus on investment properties for middle income earners, strategic first-time homebuyers, and young families.

Education

- Real Estate Development Leadership Certificate – University of Calgary/Real Estate Development Institute, 2023
- Diploma of Interior Design – Interior Design Institute, 2024
- BSc, Civil Engineering – Royal Military College of Canada – Class of 2007
- BA, Political Economy – Athabasca University, 2013
- Executive MBA with Finance Specialization – University of Calgary, 2015
- BA, English – Athabasca University, 2024
- BA, History – Athabasca University, 2024

Professional Associations

- Professional Engineer (P Eng)
- Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA)
- Project Management Professional (PMP)

Personal

I have been married to my wife, Jody, since 2011 and we have two sons, Andrew and Jonathan, and a daughter, Julianna. I am a former member of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, a regiment in the Canadian Armed Forces, and served for one tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2009/10. Since completing my service, I have worked in the energy and mining sectors as a development and operations engineer. Keenly interested in real estate, I have steadily built my investment real estate portfolio since 2015. When I'm not thinking about real estate, I'm devoted to my kids, study history, and nurse a nascent addiction to college football, particularly the Texas A&M Aggies.

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How Calgary's Green Line LRT went from foundational transit project to multibillion-dollar bust

What began as a plan for a bus-only rapid transit line eventually turned into a full-fledged LRT project before unravelling after more than a decade of work

Author of the article:

[Mackenzie Rhode](#)

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Calgary city council decided on Tuesday to [wind down work on the Green Line project](#) at a cost of \$850 million, bringing the total cost of the project to more than \$2 billion.

Council voted 10-5 to stop work and look at ways to transfer management of the Green Line over to the province. The vote landed at the end of a day-long meeting during which municipal officials stressed the city's vision for the Green Line was not feasible without provincial backing, which was suddenly withdrawn earlier this month.

Planning for Calgary's Green Line as we know it began in 2011, though the need for a light rail has been under consideration by council since the mid-1980s, according to the city's Green Line project history.

In May 2011, around 2,150 Calgarians attended open houses where they explored the concept of an LRT line along Nose Creek, Edmonton Trail or Centre Street N.

"A new planning study determined a route based on a Centre Street N. or Edmonton Trail alignment," the city noted at the time. In March 2012, the North Central Planning Study looked into land use planning for transit-oriented development (TOD). This study continued for two years, eventually showing communities would be better served if the North Central LRT was more centrally located. By December that same year, the Calgary Herald reported on a draft approval of what the city called the RouteAhead blueprint, which outlined transit plans between then and 2040.

"Calgary Transit's new long-range plan was designed to take the politics out of prioritizing new rail and bus lines," reported the Herald.

The plan was to begin with bus-only lanes in the southeast and along the route down Centre Street or Edmonton Trail, with construction to start in the southeast, but completion on the Centre Street or Edmonton Trail route to be first.

This sparked debates between affected areas of the city, as residents in each believed they should be first to see improvements. Though the RouteAhead blueprint appeared to be definitive, Shane Keating, Ward 12 councillor at the time, said the real decision would be made when funding actually arrived to build new train lines.

Naheed Nenshi, who began his job as Calgary mayor promising a southeast LRT to Douglasdale as the first priority for transit grants, said the north-southeast debate shouldn't exist. He pointed out LRT legs would be connected and built in segments starting in 2012 and continuing over the next 28 years.

"We are allowing ourselves to be drawn into a debate where none exists," Nenshi said at the time. "According to your thinking, it's all one line," he told the RouteAhead authors.

Nenshi supported the bus-only lanes, saying a \$300-million busway from downtown to the south would shave significant time off current commutes, which was the primary concern heard from area residents. Documents at the time suggested it would save almost as much time as a full LRT would, for about one-tenth the cost.

A lack of money at the time meant the city could only partially start either leg of the north-southeast line until 2022, or fund bus lanes from Douglasdale to north of Glenmore Trail in the southeast, and on Centre Street from downtown to 24th Avenue N.

City feels lack of funding for southeast LRT line, pivots

By June 2013, rapid transit to the southeast had been ranked last in a city study of future transit expansions.

A 2013 cost-benefit analysis of the project estimated the southeast transitway to \$108.81/rider, with high redevelopment potential at a total of \$642 million overall. It was believed it would cut commutes by 13 minutes.

Nenshi, realizing there wasn't enough money to fund a \$2.7-billion southeast LRT line, began his push for the Green Line approach, which at the time would have seen the southeast and north-central routes developed as a single line.

In October 2013, the Calgary Herald reported Calgary's relationship with senior levels of government would become critical in the coming years as Nenshi looked to progress the status of the Green Line.

By November that same year — due to a \$520-million commitment from city council — transit officials said they would be installing bus lanes and sections of specialized transit roadway piece by piece, in a design meant to shorten an 80-minute commute to 45 minutes.

The \$520-million commitment came from a council decision to use the city's \$52-million tax surplus from 2015 to 2024 to fund the Green Line project.

In 2013, it was estimated to cost \$760 million to build the entire project, with some of the \$520 million going to borrowing costs, so councillors were counting on federal or provincial dollars arrive to fund part of the busway.

The Herald reported in 2013 that a full LRT on the Green Line would cost \$5 billion.

In early 2014, Calgary committed to \$889 million in transit investments, including the southeast Green Line transit-only roadway and lanes, along the future LRT corridor and the Green Line bus-only lanes in the north.

The city completed TOD background research for the Green Line, including reviewing city policies, North American TOD best practices and conducting a GIS analysis of existing conditions and land use to prioritize site selection. Additionally, officials estimated the long-term demand for multi-family housing and the potential for new office space.

By all accounts, a plan was underway.

Green Line costs add, waiting for federal funding

By September 2014, officials realized it would cost the city more than half a billion dollars to extend the planned Green Line's bus-only lanes to the South Health Campus and Country Hills Village, beyond the \$625 million already pegged for the first phase of the transitway.

Calgary didn't have enough money for the first phase, targeted for completion in 2021, which was set to offer specialized bus roads, bridges and bus-only lanes on existing streets from Centre Street and 78th Avenue North in Huntington Hills down to Douglas Glen Terminal in southeast Calgary.

Officials had to pivot, and planned to leave out a chunk of the southeast section — around Ogden and Riverbend — until it could secure \$105 million in federal Building Canada Fund grants or other money.

By the end of 2014, the Green Line — at the time, a 40-kilometre LRT line that spanned the city and linked through a downtown tunnel — was seen as unobtainable due to its approximately \$5-billion price tag.

Nenshi hopeful at hint of federal funding

The federal government, led by then-prime minister Stephen Harper, announced in 2015 a Public Transit Fund which promised \$750 million over the first two years spread across the country, with a \$1-billion annual fund by 2019.

Nenshi, who at the time was still the mayor of Calgary, hoped this would be a fund the city could potentially rely on to upgrade the planned Green Line route between the South Health Campus to Country Hills from a bus-only route into a low-floor CTrain link. With the announcement of federal funding, council put forward a motion to extend the city's commitment of \$52 million per year from 10 years to 30 years, ultimately providing \$1.5 billion toward the project.

Up to this point, the Green Line's multibillion-dollar conversion to LRT had been forecast for the late 2020s or 2030s, with no reliable funding stream to deliver it.

Still in 2015, the city held public meetings to share options and development concepts for South Hill, Ogden, Lynnwood/Millican, 26th Avenue S.E. and Ramsay/Inglewood stations. Citizen input was to be used in development plans.

Additionally, the city held several Green Line Southeast public information sessions to "inform citizens about the upcoming engineering and design work to be done, land use studies to be conducted, and outline how interested citizens can be involved in the process," according to the project timeline.

By April 2015, the Green Line Southeast Transitway was in its preliminary design stage, and council was to be asked to make a final decision in October.

Fabiola MacIntyre, a senior transportation engineer with the City of Calgary at the time, said it was hoped construction on the project would begin in 2017, with an opening date of 2021.

Debate over provincial funding continues

In July 2015, the federal Conservatives gave Calgary \$1.53 billion to be used for the Green Line, ahead of a federal election call. Jason Kenney, Calgary MP and national defence minister at the time, announced the contribution.

Kenney maintained the timing of the cash infusion was appropriate for a fund announced just months earlier, in April, and not because of a looming federal election.

The announcement of the federal funding put pressure on the provincial NDP government, as did opposition parties.

In 2015, the Wildrose Party's then-finance critic Derek Fildebrandt said: "The Green Line is important infrastructure for Calgary and for southern Alberta and this is the kind of priority infrastructure that the Wildrose believes we should be focusing public expenditures on."

Interim PC leader Ric Mclver said the province shouldn't waste an opportunity to partner with the federal government. Mclver suggested building the project in stages if the province wasn't ready to foot its share of the bill.

Nenshi pushed the provincial NDP government to make a decision by mentioning job creation. He anticipated 23,000 to be created between construction and operation of the Green Line.

The NDP provincial government at the time claimed it was kept out of the loop by the federal government and had already promised billions of infrastructure dollars for Calgary to complete the southwest ring road and [construct a state-of-the-art cancer centre](#).

Conversations of the Green Line being funded as a public-private partnership were brought up by advocacy group, Public Interest Alberta.

In September 2015, the provincial NDP government committed to \$162 million to be spent on LRT electrical upgrades and bus rapid transit/transitway projects in Calgary's south and north over seven years.

Brian Mason, transportation minister at the time, made the announcement but would not say if the province would commit any money specifically for Calgary's Green Line LRT.

He did, however, say with oil prices remaining low and the NDP government on track to post a \$6.5-billion deficit that year, it was unlikely the province would announce any funding for the Green Line in the near future.

In December 2015, Calgary city council was told the provincial government needed to contribute to the Green Line, or the city was at risk of losing federal funding.

Calgarians pay Green Line costs

Nenshi submitted an official request for funding for the Green Line LRT in January 2016.

A report to city council said funding for the project must be secured by October 2016 or construction of the train line could be broken up into stages. Nenshi needed both provincial and federal commitment, as the federal funding was first promised by the previous Conservative government but the Liberals had since been elected into power.

Calgary homeowners faced a property tax increase in 2016 of nearly \$170 on the average house as a result of the province's annual property tax requisition, a 10.2 per cent increase from the previous year.

After facing backlash and resident complaints, city council decided to grant taxpayers a one-time rebate of the money on 2014 tax bills, before scooping up the annual tax room for 10 years to help cover a portion of the city's share Green Line LRT.

Feds, province to contribute \$146 million

In December 2016, the federal and provincial governments announced a contribution of \$146 million for Calgary's Green Line LRT, with the federal government committing to \$1.5 billion.

"This funding brings us one step closer to beginning construction on the Green Line project," Nenshi said at the time of the announcement.

"It's also a show of commitment by all three orders of government to getting that Green Line project done."

The joint funding announcement appeared to have removed any uncertainty remaining about the project's completion.

While falling short of the overall funds needed, Nenshi said the province's contribution to the Green Line is a step in the right direction.

Costs increase, construction delayed

By February 2017, officials estimated the cost of the Green Line LRT to exceed \$6 billion, and the project to take longer to complete with construction set to begin in 2019.

At this point, the city has already spent approximately \$101 million on the LRT project, with no official confirmation of provincial funding specific to the Green Line.

The provincial NDP government said it would not commit to its one-third share of the funding until the city was clear about the project's cost and scope.

Nenshi and Keating, pioneers of the Green Line, were hopeful of the project's success despite no dollar commitment for the project in the provincial budget.

By May 2017, the city's transportation boss revealed the 46-kilometre Green Line LRT would be split into phases and the first segment — then slated to open in 2026 — would stretch 20 kilometres and exceed the initial \$4.5-billion estimate for the entire line.

Nenshi said the council's design choices were the reason for the cost discrepancy.

City council approved the final alignment and 28 station locations for what was to be Calgary's largest public works project — the multibillion-dollar, 46-kilometre Green Line LRT — in a 12-3 vote in June 2017.

By July the same year, then-premier Rachel Notley pledged \$1.53 billion from the provincial carbon levy for Calgary's Green Line LRT. The province's funding was dedicated for the first phase of the project.

In October 2017, Jyoti Gondek was elected as Ward 3 city councillor, saying the ward had previously been overlooked for the Green Line expansion. She said one of her priorities will be to start working on assembling the land along Centre Street to ensure the Green Line could eventually make its way north into far north-central Calgary.

In December 2017, Mac Logan, former general manager of transportation for the City of Calgary, [abruptly resigned](#).

In the weeks before his resignation, Logan was on leave from his job just as work was ramping up on the multibillion-dollar Green Line project. He [received a payout of \\$471,596](#) upon his departure as part of a settlement reached between Logan and city management.

Council argues north versus south for extension

In early 2018, city council argued strengths of a northern vs southern expansion of the LRT.

The Green Line project team told councillors that one of the strengths of the northern leg is the existing ridership, pointing out that 35,000 people used transit to cross the Centre Street Bridge each day. Coun. Sean Chu offered a more blunt argument on Green Line priorities. "The north should go first if we have extra money," said the Ward 4 councillor.

An amendment from Gondek directed the city to look at ways to use existing Green Line land in the north for Bus Rapid Transit or other pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Keating maintained his position on wanting the southern expansion.

A report came out in 2019 hinting that the future LRT line would only reach as far north as 64th Avenue N., disappointing Green Line advocates in the area.

Due to years of delays, expectations on when Calgary will see Stage 2, with further expansions, remained bleak.

In late 2018 as the city considered a 'single-bore' tunnel to reduce street-level disruptions during construction of the Green Line, some members of council raised concerns that the flow of information from the Green Line team had "gone silent."

Then-councillor Druh Farrell of Ward 7 complained that it had been difficult to get a meeting with the Green Line team, and that after years of consultations with the public and councillors on this project, communication had stopped. Gondek agreed, while Keating downplayed concerns.

Green Line faces criticism, Calgary admits faults

In early 2019 Kenney, who had become leader of Alberta's United Conservative Party, blasted the city for cutting the Green Line in half, wondering why the Green Line he had funded when involved in federal government was not being built.

The UCP leader took to social media to express concerns and complaints over the trajectory of the project.

At this point, a formal funding agreement had not yet been signed.

Keating admitted the project had fallen behind, and officials were trying to catch up.

Economists began criticizing the project in 2019, including concerns over the city's liquidity and future costs as a result of Green Line construction in the wake of several other major projects.

A group of businessmen, helmed by veteran oilman Jim Gray, made an informal presentation to council's transportation committee in 2019 urging a halt to spending and a one-year pause to carry out an in-depth review of the project.

Gray believed any stumbles on the project would bring the entire city down.

In 2020, Gray called the plan a "potential financial disaster."

Shortly after Gray's plea, then-councillor Evan Woolley put forward an urgent notice of motion asking for a comprehensive review before the city moved forward with the project, to ensure it aligned with the city's current and future financial position.

These concerns initiated an independent review, without halting work.

By summer 2019, the city had split stage one into two parts. The plan was then for construction to begin in 2021 on the southern leg of the route, with work on the core held off until as late as 2022.

By December 2019, a council committee agreed to a delay on revealing route options for the Green Line through downtown to give officials time to workshop the project.

Provincial funding concerns return

In late 2019, the new provincial UCP government announced its budget, delaying funds for transit projects. This would have forced the city to borrow more money, increasing interest payments.

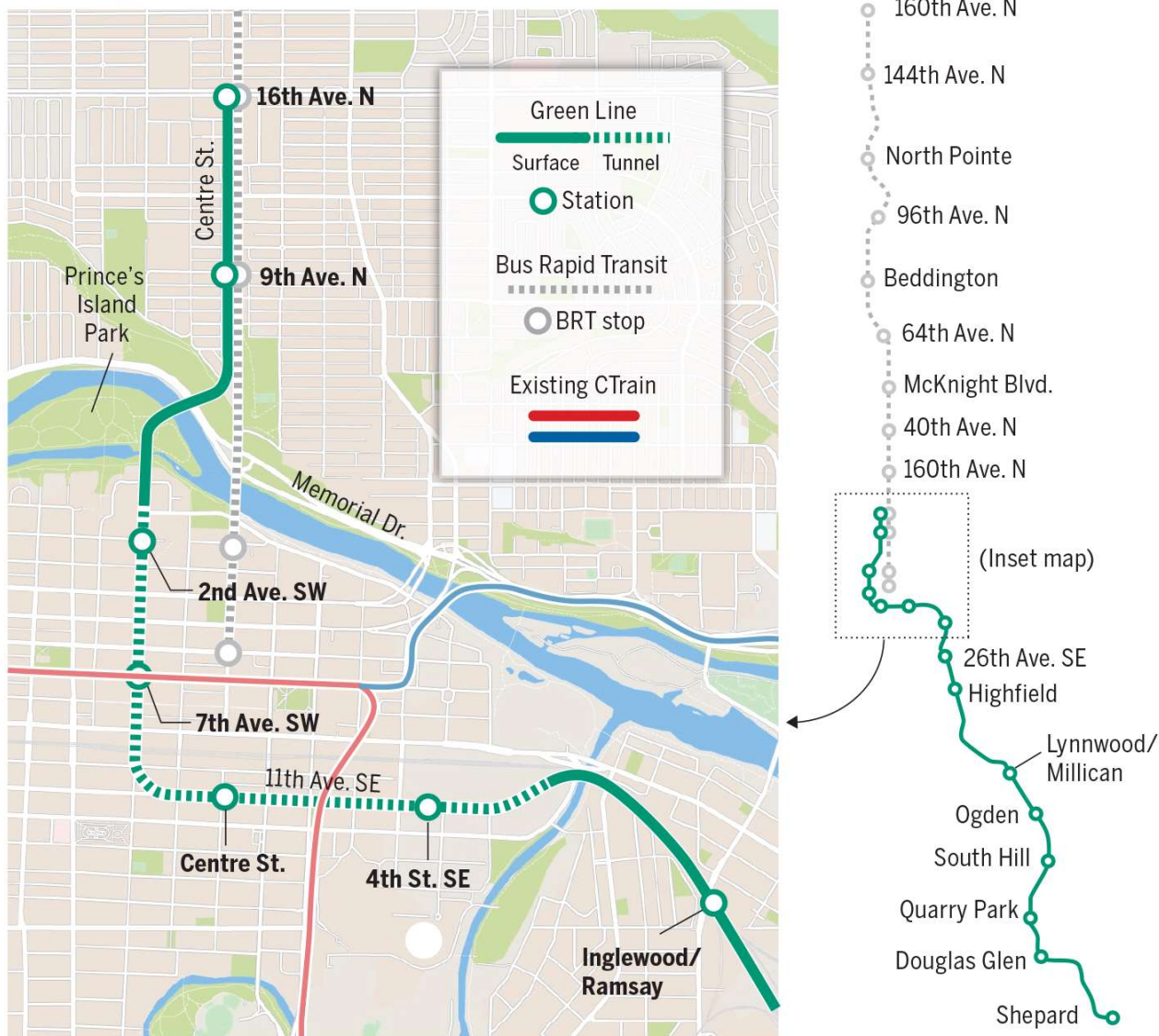
The province sought to include a 90-day cancellation clause on its \$1.53 billion in Green Line funding, leading the city to turn back to Ottawa for funding or face further delays.

In the midst of funding concerns and public distrust, the Green Line committee began to crumble. A 2019 committee meeting turned to in-fighting between members.

By the end of 2019, several council members were urging the city to nix spending for a planned new arena, and instead use that money for the Green Line LRT.

GREEN LINE, PHASE ONE

CTrain would run from Shepard in the south to 16th Avenue in the north. Most of the downtown route would be underground, with a bridge over Prince’s Island Park. BRT improvements will be made from downtown to 160th Ave. N.



Green Line gets green light, then delayed by provincial review

In a much-anticipated June 2020 vote, city council gave approval to the first stage of the Green Line, solidifying plans for a new LRT running from 16th Avenue N. to Shepard in the southeast.

At this point, the city had spent more than \$550 million on the project, still anticipating a 2021 start and 2026 completion with an estimated total cost of \$5.5 billion.

Mclver publicly released a letter to Nenshi, acknowledging significant changes in cost and scope since the project's initial announcement, and that the province must ensure the \$1.53 billion it had committed to the Green Line was used responsibly. The province also expressed willingness to revisit the 90-day cancellation clause, bringing hopes of provincial funding back on the table.

The Green Line committee spent much of 2021 under review by the UCP provincial government, followed by delays in hiring a company to build the first piece of the project. By June 2021, there was no date for when construction could start.

Keating anticipated the UCP review would delay the project by one to two years.

Once the review was approved, Mclver called the project "a massive investment in the future of Calgary," acknowledging that the provincial government finally had faith in the Green Line.

Darshpreet Bhatti was appointed as CEO of the project in 2021, saying his major concern was more delays. By January 2022, more than \$680 million had been spent on the project.

In January 2023, it was announced that [Eau Claire Market would be demolished](#) to accommodate an underground Green Line LRT station, displacing more than 50 businesses.

Shortly after, in March, the city was in talks of starting Green Line construction in Ogden, with work expected to begin in summer of 2023.

Momentum continued as [River Run residents were forced from their homes](#) to make space for the LRT project.

Calgary Green Line LRT CEO Darshpreet Bhatti speaks at the opening of the first phase of the new George Moss Park redevelopment in Ogden on Sept. 7, 2024. Gavin Young/Postmedia

Concerns ramped up again in March 2024, when city council members were told costs were expected to escalate.

Bhatti told councillors the Green Line's budget was determined before the COVID-19 pandemic, and inflationary pressures had affected the market for infrastructure projects since then.

At the end of July, council announced the city was [shortening the Green Line LRT again](#). The revised scope, intended to cut costs, would take out five more stations.

Shortly following that, a UCP cabinet minister indicated the province no longer supported the project, and the city considered transferring management to the Alberta government.

Each of these concerns further delayed construction on the Green Line, ultimately resulting in Tuesday's decision to [wind down the project](#), costing an estimated additional \$850 million, bringing the total cost of the Green Line LRT project to \$2.1 billion — without any track ever being laid.

— With files from Postmedia

Promising momentum for Calgary's Green Line LRT project

[Alesia Fieldberg](#)

CTV News Calgary Video Journalist

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The Green Line LRT project seemed to stall in September but many say it hasn't gone off the rails, as Calgary's mayor and the province met again to discuss options on Friday.

"With all these ongoing Green Line conversations right now, I think you will see a Green Line by the end of the decade -- at least an initial Green Line by the end of the decade," said David Cooper, transit expert.

Mayor Jyoti Gondek, Premier Danielle Smith and Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors Minister Devin Dreeshen met in Red Deer on Friday morning.

Gondek called it another productive meeting.

"In the interest of taxpayers, I'm focused on every way that wind-down of the original Green Line project can be carried out in a manner that retains the highest value and benefit for Calgarians," she said.

The province says it remains committed to delivering a Green Line.

"We continue to work productively with the City of Calgary toward a cost-effective Green Line alignment that connects the Red and Blue lines, the new event centre and southeast communities," Dreeshen said.

Earlier this month, city council voted to stop the current iteration of the Green Line and hand the project over to the Alberta government after the province said it would no longer provide its portion of the funding unless the city changed the original vision.

Others with experience building major projects in Calgary are confident the transit project will pull through.

"You have to learn from others and you have to listen, and that's what allows you to move forward. That's what we did on the Saddledome. You have to travel and you have to listen to people," said Art Froese, development consultant.

Froese says other major cities are not only focused on light-rail transit but a combination of solutions including trolleys.

The Green Line was dreamed up more than a decade ago and since then, many things have changed including governments and prices.

Recent discussions have focused on trimming the line and getting rid of tunnels to rein-in ballooning costs.

All three levels of governments are funding the project.

"I think it's important our three levels of government work together to bring investment to Calgarians," said MP George Chahal.

"We need public transit. We need to make sure projects like the Green Line can be built."

The city says more than \$1.3 billion has already been spent on land, construction and train cars, and it will cost another \$850 million to wind the project down.

But observers say it shouldn't end there.

"We have 12 major transit projects all across Canada. If Calgary doesn't want to move forward with the Green Line, there are a lot of cities in line that need the support, materials, people," Cooper said.

The province is paying for a review including proposals for an above-ground alignment.

That report is expected in December.