Highway 2 Improvements: Section C

Red Deer Valley Overview & Fact Sheet – January 2026

Section C Overview

Highway 2 is a critical part of Alberta's provincial transportation system, linking the Edmonton and Calgary metropolitan regions and supporting the movement of people, goods, and services across the province. Through the Red Deer area, Highway 2 also serves an important local function, providing access for residents, businesses, and institutions on both sides of the Red Deer River.

This dual role creates a fundamental design requirement: a provincial highway must meet provincial traffic needs while serving the communities through which it passes. In the Red Deer River valley, the existing highway is not meeting that requirement.

Why improvements are needed

The section of Highway 2 through the Red Deer River Valley experiences a higher-than-average incident rate compared with other portions of the corridor. This is largely due to a combination of high traffic volumes and geometric features — tight curves, sharp crests, and limited sightlines — that reflect 1950s design standards, not modern safety expectations.

Traffic volumes continue to grow year over year as Alberta's population increases. Without the planned improvements, congestion and incident frequency are expected to worsen, increasing risks for highway users and compounding delays for both long-distance and local trips.

In addition, the twin Red Deer River bridges, in service since the early 1960s, are nearing the end of their serviceable life. The increasing frequency and cost of maintenance required to keep them safe has resulted in repeated lane closures, further reducing reliability and capacity on one of Alberta's most important highways.

What the project includes

The Highway 2 improvements in the Red Deer River area include:

- Widening the highway between 32 Street and Highway 11 from four lanes to eight lanes, reflecting traffic demand and Red Deer's role as a regional hub
- Replacing the existing Red Deer River bridges with new structures designed to modern safety and reliability standards
- Correcting substandard curves and grades to improve sightlines, driver expectations, and incident outcomes
- Designing Highway 2 to the freeway design speed of 130 km/h, consistent with modern Alberta standards for highway geometry.

Why it's happening now

Highway 2 is a vital corridor that is essential to Alberta's economy and prosperity. This section of the highway is well overdue for capacity and safety upgrades, and the condition of the Red Deer River bridges makes replacement increasingly urgent. Advancing the project now allows critical safety risks to be addressed and avoids compounding costs and disruptions in the future.

Why the highway through the Red Deer River Valley can't be widened in place

Widening the existing alignment would not reduce the high incident rate and would in fact worsen several substandard features, including tight curves and limited sightlines, and would require replacing the bridges in the same location. This would also result in prolonged and severe traffic disruptions, as no viable detour route is available.

Alignment and commitment

For more than a decade, multiple options were examined in collaboration with the City of Red Deer and other stakeholders. Constraints include the Red Deer River valley, an adjacent rail corridor, residential development, and established parklands. While no option avoids impacts entirely, the selected alignment reflects the optimal solution that meets modern safety and operational standards while minimizing impacts to adjacent lands.

The Government of Alberta is committed to the selected alignment, through the river valley. While construction funding has not yet been allocated, the project is being advanced to be shovel-ready when funding decisions are announced. This approach reflects the urgency of the safety issues being addressed and the importance of minimizing future disruption.

Government recognizes the concerns raised during earlier engagement and is committed to enhancing clarity, transparency, and ongoing dialogue as the project progresses.

Public Engagement and Consultation

How public engagement has influenced project decisions

Public engagement has played an important role in shaping how the project is being developed, particularly in how potential impacts are understood, avoided where possible, and mitigated.

Over time, public input has helped inform:

- Refinements to design details intended to reduce impacts on adjacent parks and neighbourhoods
- Identification of environmental features that warrant avoidance or special protection
- Consideration of construction staging, traffic management, and access during construction
- The scope and focus of mitigation measures, including habitat replacement and trail connectivity
- The need for clearer, more accessible information and ongoing dialogue

At the same time, certain project fundamentals — including the need for additional capacity, meeting modern safety standards, and the selected alignment through the river valley — are driven by technical, safety, and operational requirements. These elements are not determined by engagement. Public engagement is therefore used to improve the project, not to revisit decisions that are required to meet provincial safety standards.

We remain committed to listening, explaining decisions clearly, and incorporating feedback in ways that meaningfully reduce impacts while delivering a safer, functional and more reliable Highway 2. Additional engagement opportunities will be communicated as they are scheduled.

Alignment and Design

The reason for the eastward alignment shift in the river valley

Given the physical constraints of the river valley, rail corridor, and adjacent lands, there are very few practical options. The presence of the rail line to the west prevents any highway improvement to the west. Shifting a short portion of the highway to the east allows the road to meet modern safety and geometric standards.

Other alignments considered

Various options on both sides of the existing highway were evaluated, as was the option of widening in place. Alternatives would have resulted in greater environmental impacts, significant rail disruptions, significantly higher costs, substandard results, or a combination of these factors. The selected alignment reflects the most practical and responsible solution.

Lanes, Speed, and Safety

The reason for eight lanes between 32 St and Highway 11 instead of six

Between 32 Street and Highway 11, daily traffic volumes are higher by about 10,000 vehicles, a 19% increase, than in the adjacent sections due to local Red Deer traffic using Highway 2 as a river crossing and arterial route. Eight lanes are required to safely and efficiently accommodate both provincial through-traffic and local travel demands that would otherwise increase congestion on the City's road network.

130 km/h design speed - what it means

The design speed for all freeways in Alberta is 130 km/hr. Design speed refers to the standard used to design the roadway's geometry — curves, sight distances, and grades — not the posted speed limit. It functions as a safety buffer, much like designing an elevator to carry more weight than it is permitted to carry in normal use.

Design speed vs. posted speed

Posted speed limits are set separately through regulation. The design speed ensures that the roadway operates safely at posted speeds, while providing additional margin for driver error, weather, and traffic conditions. The design standard ensures safety and resilience, while posted speeds reflect operational policy, enforcement, and driver expectations. Together, they support safer and more predictable travel.

Environmental and Park Impacts

How parks will be affected

Portions of Maskepetoon Park and Heritage Ranch will be impacted. These impacts are not taken lightly and have been carefully considered throughout the design process, with extensive work done to minimize environmental impacts.

Minimizing impacts on Maskepetoon Park

The selected alignment avoids the most sensitive areas where possible, including limited and critical habitat. The project team is working closely with environmental specialists and listening to local stakeholders to reduce impacts and incorporate mitigation measures.

The northern portion of Maskepetoon Park includes a groundwater-dependent fen system that is highly sensitive to disturbance. These areas are being deliberately avoided, as even minor changes to drainage or grading can permanently alter their ecological function. Where impacts are proposed in the southern part of Maskepetoon Park, opportunities to offset losses are being explored.

Wildlife movement

The new alignment and bridge design provides improved opportunities for wildlife movement along the river valley compared with the existing highway and rail corridor.

Multiple animal-vehicle collision prone locations have been identified across the existing highway that will be addressed as part of the new alignment and highway widening. Analysis is currently underway for mitigations to reduce animal-vehicle collisions in the project area while continuing to allow for wildlife movement, following the Government of Alberta guidelines for animal-vehicle collision mitigations.

Environmental Assessment and Permitting

Environmental assessments have been completed by qualified professionals to review project interactions on components such as soil, vegetation, wetlands, watercourses, fish and fish habitat, wildlife, and historical resources. This information will be utilized to guide the environmental permitting and compliance processes under federal and provincial legislation including but not limited to:

- *Fisheries Act*
- *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*
- *Water Act*
- *Public Lands Act*
- *Historical Resources Act*

The project team is actively working with the respective regulatory bodies to obtain the necessary permits and approvals for the new highway alignment and bridge locations in compliance with legislation.

Property and Community Considerations

Property values

Property value impacts are difficult to predict and depend on many factors. The project is designed to minimize impacts to adjacent neighbourhoods, and long-term improvements to safety, reliability, and park connectivity may provide community benefits. Potentially, following the planned Highway 2 upgrades, the improved transportation system may have a positive impact on property values.

Traffic noise

While traffic volumes and associated noise will continue to grow regardless of the project, the improved alignment, smoother grades, and modern pavement are expected to reduce braking, acceleration, and congestion-related noise compared with existing conditions.

Lighting

Highway lighting will be designed to meet safety requirements and provide illumination consistency through the Red Deer area.

As well, lighting will be designed to minimize spillover into adjacent neighbourhoods and natural areas. For example, lower light masts will help keep the lighting more closely focused on the roadway.

Indigenous Engagement and Consultation

Government's approach to Indigenous engagement and consultation

The Government of Alberta is fully committed to meeting its Indigenous consultation and engagement obligations. Proposed project components are submitted to the Aboriginal Consultation Office (ACO) to determine consultation requirements. Where the ACO has identified consultation requirements with specific Indigenous communities, provincial consultation processes are being followed. Meanwhile, engagement with interested communities is occurring through the public engagement opportunities. Both approaches include respectful, timely, and meaningful communication with recognized Indigenous communities whose traditional territories and interests may be affected by the project.

The influence of Indigenous consultation and engagement on project decisions

Feedback from recognized Indigenous communities is an integral part of project planning. It helps inform design refinements, mitigation measures, and construction practices, with the goal of avoiding or minimizing impacts where possible and addressing concerns in a meaningful way.

Construction and Timing

Start of construction

Construction timing has not yet been finalized. The project is being advanced so it will be ready to proceed once funding is allocated. *Considerations will be made for instream restricted activity periods and sensitive wildlife periods.*

Traffic management during construction

Maintaining traffic flow is an important objective. Constructing new bridges on a new alignment allows most traffic to remain on the existing highway during major construction activities and reduces construction duration.