

Presentation by

Jim Gray

to

The Green Line Committee

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Hello, my name is Jim Gray.

I want to start by saying “thank you”. This is a very tough time to be in public service and you deserve our gratitude.

I am a frequent Calgary Transit rider. I often take the C-train to City Hall, the Kerby Centre, the University of Calgary and elsewhere.

The question you might ask is why would a Senior like me care so much about the Green Line. After all, the decision you make will have little impact on me. I will probably be long gone by the time the final bills come due.

My reason for doing what I’m doing is that I am very worried about my City.

I was born in 1933 and I’ve seen big, big changes in my life.

I can remember World War II vividly. The 1950s and 60s seem like they were yesterday.

Many of those changes have been breathtaking, both scary and and exciting.

But for all of these incredible changes, I believe the one we starting to see right now might be the biggest.

The transformation in the global energy industry, which is still in its early years, is a painful and difficult process for our city. Thousands of people unemployed and empty downtown offices are not what any of us want to see.

COVID-19 is accelerating changes that were already underway, on a global scale.

Many people are changing how and where they work. They are adapting to work from home. The change is dramatic, and it will continue. COVID is not a one-off event. This is the beginning, not the end. There is no going back. The status quo is dead.

In the midst of all of this financial pain, this unprecedented change and uncertainty, you are being asked to consider spending \$4.9 billion of taxpayer’s money on the most complex and expensive project in Calgary’s history.

In reality, you are committing to spending \$10 billion because \$4.9 billion delivers less than half a project.

If the current plan goes ahead, it will add at least \$40 million each and every year to the City’s operating costs. And if ridership goes down, as it almost certainly will, operating costs will go up from there.

That is why I am so worried.

Our city can’t afford a massive mistake.

We need to preserve capital. And channel it into building a city for the future, not the past.

That is why we are asking you to consider an alternative. One that is far less risky and will produce far better public transit service for the people of Calgary.

You are aware of that proposal. You may disagree with some of the details. That's fine.

The important thing is the need to stop the current City plan. It would be the height of irresponsibility to build two stub lines for \$4.9 billion and leave future Councils with a crushing burden to secure the funds to complete this project.

Governments, at all three levels, are broke and taxpayers are tapped out. We will end up with a \$4.9 billion white elephant.

A future Council will look back and wonder, What the heck were they thinking about back in 2020? It will be a future of unbearable tax increases and cuts to essential services.

Calgarians will lose faith in their civic government. Other levels of government will lose confidence in Calgary.

Our message is simple: Don't be reckless. Be responsible.

Build the Green Line. But do it right. Do it for the young people of Calgary.

I know it's not easy to change your thinking on a project that has been under discussion for 7 years. But being a leader is never easy.

If you blindly stick with the current plan, you will be remembered as the Mayor and Council that made the biggest mistake in Calgary's history.

If, on the other hand, you can summon the courage to recognize the new reality and change your thinking to accommodate that, your legacy will be a positive one. Please choose wisely.

Thank you.