

# Developers join chorus of support for new cross-city rapid transit link

BY JASON MARKUSOFF, CALGARY HERALD NOVEMBER 29, 2013

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In transit planners' cost-benefit analysis of seven new special lines in Calgary, the southeast transitway, along the future LRT corridor, ties for last spot.

**Photograph by:** Calgary Herald/Files, Calgary Herald

Property developers are joining southeast Calgary residents in cheering on council's \$520-million pledge for a new transitway servicing the public transport-starved quadrant of the city.

Real estate experts throughout the southeast have long touted to customers that rapid transit would eventually arrive in their corner of Calgary.

Now, they can tell homebuyers and office employers that a bus-only roadway from the south hospital to downtown and the north should be in place by 2018, following council's decision this week to commit the \$52 million tax fund for the next 10 years to transit.

"As the pieces of the puzzle fall into place, it's encouraging," said Doug Leighton of Brookfield Residential, Calgary's largest developer.

Brookfield built southeast communities New Brighton and McKenzie Towne, which both straddle the

future busway. It's now developing Seton — the office and retail hub near the new hospital. Leighton said the hospital and Seton were located and designed with the future LRT line in mind.

The neighbourhood's future high school and library are also sited for a transit station to be at their front door.

After leading council's push to create the \$520-million fund — Coun. Shane Keating this week said he's been congratulated by a few developers. Among them were Hopewell, whose new Mahogany suburb didn't even have a single bus stop until last December, but will get a stop on the new route.

The project was critical to bolster growth in the established parts of southeast Calgary, Keating said, particularly the new office park in Remington Development Corp.'s Quarry Park — where Imperial Oil headquarters will move next year.

"It will move more people quicker, which is obviously a benefit to the users of the park," Remington president Cody Clayton said.

After supporting the transit plan, Coun. Druh Farrell got council to endorse a study about densifying areas along the future busway corridor — along Centre St and in the southeast.

"It will be a boon to the entire line, and specifically to redevelopment. We can't have the majority of the density at the very end of the line," she said.

"We've got a lot of big parking lots next to potential LRT stations."

The bus-only system will be upgraded to LRT eventually, but that's a \$5-billion proposition. The city is hosting a funding summit next month to discuss with government officials and the private sector to discuss ways fund Calgary's next LRT line.

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