

## Residents awed by new canal footbridge plans

Posted Oct 4, 2012 By Laura Mueller

EMC news - Plans for a \$17.5 million landmark footbridge were met with unanimous support and even applause during a Sept. 27 open house at the Glebe Community Centre.

The 334-metre bridge would provide a new link for 2,500 pedestrians and cyclists each day and even more when Lansdowne Park and the Oblate lands in Old Ottawa East are redeveloped.

While a previous draft of the design featured sharper angles, it has been refined into a sleek, continuous curve spanning the Rideau Canal.

While the V-shaped support structures remain the same, engineers cleaned up a "busy" looking under-deck to give it a "tidier appearance" from below, thinking ahead to skaters passing below the bridge when the canal is frozen.

A detailed design is still to come, but the team suggested a white bridge that would imply transparency and give the bridge a clean, sleek appearance.

One lesson the team learned from the Corkstown Bridge was that such projects encourage people to congregate and sightsee - not just travel.

Some residents at the meeting asked engineers to look at the tight turns on the "switchback" ramp, and the possibility of adding stairs. Staff said the city and National Capital Commission would prefer to eliminate stairs both to improve accessibility and the ease of maintenance.

Since the new bridge would be twice the length of the Corkstown Bridge, the team is proposing a pedestrian "deck" that would encourage people to walk, sit on benches and linger along the deck portion, rather than the traveling portion. LED lights would provide consistent illumination for safety and to give the bridge an attractive glow, said Mark Langridge, one of the project's engineers.

"We definitely do not want to light it up like a Christmas tree," he said.

The plan also includes adding signalized intersections at Fifth Avenue and Queen Elizabeth Drive on the west side of the canal, and at Colonel By Drive and Clegg Avenue on the east side - a plan that was met with a loud round of applause from an audience who has long called for traffic signals there.

The engineering team spent a portion of their presentation outlining why a \$17.5-million landmark bridge was an important capital feature that's worth the cost.

The much simpler Corkstown pedestrian bridge over the canal to the north would cost about \$9 million if it was built today.

Everyone interviewed by the Ottawa East EMC and almost everyone who spoke at the open house voiced support for the bridge, but some had reservations about the \$17.5-million price tag. Capital Coun. David Chemushenko said the bridge is a smart investment because it will become such an integral east-west link in neighbourhoods that will be intensifying.

"You always wish the price was lower," Chemushenko said.

The councillor said he sees no reason why the price tag would sink the landmark project entirely, but it might delay it while the city looks for funds from other sources as well as the budget. The bridge wouldn't likely be built until the next term of council, even if this council approves the detailed design.

A number of creative solutions to pay for the bridge were proposed. Rose impressed Project manager Colin Simpson with his suggestion to seek funding from the federal government to frame the bridge as a project marking Canada's 175th birthday in 2017. Bell wondered about asking the Lansdowne Park redevelopers, Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group, to defray the cost. Old Ottawa East residents Paul Hobkirk and William Onate suggested finding a sponsor for the naming rights of the bridge. Hobkirk even suggested his own employer, Alcatel, which sponsors the Alcatel-Lucent Sunday Bike Days that close the canal

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The proposed footbridge would fly over the Lily Pond on the west side of the Rideau Canal, landing just north of the Canal Ritz restaurant on the east side of Queen Elizabeth Drive.

parkways to cars one day a week in the summer.

Old Ottawa South resident Keith Bell said he has a more cynical take than others.

"The other side of the canal is going to be inundated with parking," he said, referring to Old Ottawa East.

Clegg Avenue-area resident Ron Rose said he and his neighbours are already used to their neighbourhood becoming a parking lot during Winterlude, when skaters come for the easy access to the Rideau Canal Skateway.

"We're willing to put up with whatever extra parking comes just to have access to that way to get across the canal," Rose said.

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