
EDMONTON’S NORTHEAST LRT RAIL-WITH-TRAIL

Although many abandoned rail lines in Canada have been converted to multi-use trails, there are only a few trails adjacent to active rail systems. Extending from the east side of Downtown, Edmonton’s Light Rail Transit (LRT) right-of-way includes a parallel, 3.0 kilometre long multi-use trail. The asphalt trail is 4.0 metres wide for use by pedestrians, cyclists and other active modes, connecting Downtown with Northlands Park, Edmonton’s principal indoor hockey venue and exhibition centre.

Edmonton’s Transportation Master Plan (1999) highlighted the importance of providing a mix of travel options. A ten-year goal was to develop non-motorized facilities along rail and utility rights-of-way. City Council has since approved a 62 kilometre Multi-use Trail Corridor Network that will service all quadrants of the city. The trail corridors are equivalent to the arterial roadway system for vehicles, and form the backbone to the citywide trail system for year round use. The Rail-with-Trail along the LRT is the primary link to northeast Edmonton. During the planning and design process, foremost tasks included conducting an independent safety audit, value engineering sessions and extensive review to safely integrate the multi-use trail with the surrounding roadway network and LRT operations. Similar case studies were researched, VISSIM simulation models utilized to examine different crossing options, and innovative signal timings developed to coordinate the trail crossing signal with both the roadway network and any approaching LRT vehicles. Compatibility with LRT operations was a major consideration, ranging from trespassing concerns on the rails, delineating the adjacent rail and trail facilities, and discouraging unauthorized access to LRT stations. A broad project team was established including engineers, designers, signals experts, LRT drivers, maintenance and security personnel, each of whom contributed to design development. Construction of Edmonton’s Northeast LRT Rail-with-Trail occurred between 2002 and 2005. An opening of the project took place August 29, 2002 that also celebrated installation of a community mural created during a local art festival. Other elements to beautify the corridor include tree planting, landscaping nodes and unique trail lighting.