



# Council highlights

## James Walker Trail Stage 3 Project Update

Cochrane has completed the first two stages of a project to connect North and South Cochrane via James Walker Trail (JWT). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Southbow Cochrane Development Corporation on April 15, 2024, outlining their collaboration on the trail's construction. While not legally binding, the terms will be included in a formal agreement by October 12, 2024. Stage 3 design is underway with an \$880K budget, and construction in 2025/2026 is estimated at \$18.8M. JWT will enhance connectivity in South Cochrane.

## Canada Public Transit Fund

The Government of Canada launched the \$3 billion annual Canada Public Transit Fund on July 17, 2024, to improve public transit systems through three funding streams. Cochrane is collaborating with Alberta to ensure the Calgary Metropolitan Region qualifies for up to \$2 billion in the Metro-Region Agreement stream, which requires a plan aligned with federal goals.

While Cochrane is ineligible for the smaller Baseline Funding stream due to the absence of fixed-route transit, Administration will present a recommendation to Council at the September 9 regular meeting of Council to consider preparing to submit an Expression of Interest.

## 2024 COLT Operational Update

In April 2019, Cochrane partnered with Southland Transportation to launch the COLT transit pilot, which has experienced steady ridership growth. In August 2022, a two-year agreement began in January 2023 to add 21.5 weekday vehicle hours at no cost to Cochrane, enhancing commuter services. By 2023, COLT served 68,000 riders, increasing to 49,000 by mid-August 2024.

As the contract expires in September 2024, Administration identified budget issues from underbudgeting, missed fuel surcharges, and inflation. The new proposal will eliminate the additional hours, retain the fuel surcharge, and adjust rates for inflation.

At the September 23 Council meeting, Administration will bring forward a recommendation regarding maintaining current service hours, investing in Cochrane's transit future, and expanding the system to accommodate the growing community needs.

## Cochrane Transit Study Mid-Point

The transit study, which began earlier this year, is set to conclude by November 2024. The study is at its mid-point. Administration provided Council with an update on the feedback received to date, as well as an overview of the second phase of engagement which will take place throughout September, focusing on service and network design.

On September 23, Administration will present a recommendation for the future direction of COLT transit incorporating the study results they have received.