



Transportation Association of Canada
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
2010 Nomination

City of Edmonton
Transportation Planning Branch
March 8, 2011



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INTRODUCTION

Edmonton is the capital city of Alberta and, with its neighbouring communities, encompasses the sixth largest metropolitan region in Canada. Similar to other major Canadian cities, Edmonton is experiencing strong growth combined with a trend towards further suburbanization, which is affecting travel patterns across the city by increasing both car usage and trip distance. Recent Statistics Canada data show that more than three-quarters of Edmonton's daily trips are made by automobile. Over the next 30 years, the population of the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area is expected to increase by over 50%. This growth will bring about enormous levels of change and challenge as services are delivered to many new people, businesses, and industries.

The City of Edmonton recently completed a Transportation Master Plan, *The Way We Move*. This plan was approved by Edmonton City Council in September of 2009, and was developed in an integrated manner with the Municipal Development Plan to reflect the interconnectedness between transportation and land use. *The Way We Move* establishes a framework for how the City of Edmonton will address its future transportation needs. It emphasizes moving people and goods rather than vehicles.

Two of the key goals of the *The Way We Move* are "Transportation Mode Shift" and "Transportation and Land Use Integration". The City is planning investments in infrastructure to support these goals, such as expansion of the LRT network, new bike lanes, and an improved sidewalk network. However, in the end it is residents who will have to change their travel behaviour to achieve this goal.

The implementation of *The Way We Move* includes a significant public education program to actively engage residents. The overall intent is to educate them about how sustainable travel options can benefit both their own lives and the city as a whole, and then encourage them to change their travel behaviour. One of the first activities of this approach was to construct Edmonton's future in LEGO.

SUMMARY

Partnering with the TELUS World of Science, City of Edmonton Transportation Planning staff constructed an exhibit entirely out of LEGO to illustrate the philosophy and vision behind *The Way We Move*. Through LEGO, the City was able to communicate a friendly and approachable message about sustainable transportation. Children and their parents learned about how Edmonton's vision for a sustainable future will bring change to the city, and how they can contribute to making it happen. LEGO allowed the City to illustrate travel options that are currently available to citizens, as well as show how major changes such as LRT expansion would improve future travel options. The project was covered by print, radio, and television media, resulting in the City's message being shared with an audience well beyond the direct participants.



EXECUTION

The project began with an invitation by the TELUS World of Science to the City of Edmonton to provide information about *The Way We Move* as part of their upcoming Wings, Wheels, and Waves: A LEGO World of Transportation exhibit. While the rest of the exhibit would employ LEGO to present the history of transportation, the City of Edmonton's display was designed to focus on a LEGO model of Edmonton's future. The City's display would present an interconnected city, with neighbourhoods served by integrated LRT and bus networks. It would show examples of all the different transportation mode connections between where people work, play, and live.

First, it had to be built. To provide easily identifiable landmarks, the plan for the model included custom-designed models of several of Edmonton's iconic structures, including City Hall and the Chinatown entrance gate. Generic houses, shops, and vehicles were provided by many of the standard LEGO 'City' kits, as well as a great number of generous loans from staff and their families, private businesses, and the TELUS World of Science itself.

While City staff resources were allocated to coordinate logistics, all of the actual construction of the components of the display took place outside of business hours, as volunteer time. In all, more than two dozen City staff and their family members volunteered over 250 hours to build the display. During the final phases of construction local media outlets showed interest in covering the project. As a result, GLOBAL News Edmonton brought a reporter and camera crew to cover setup, which featured prominently in that night's newscast. The finished display included the LEGO model itself, several poster boards giving information about *The Way We Move*, and small information cards within the model to communicate the direction of the plan.

The City then undertook two different initiatives to engage the public using the model: "Transportation Day" and "*The Way We Move* Challenge".

Transportation Day was hosted by staff from the Transportation Planning Branch, Edmonton Transit System, and the Planning and Development Department at the TELUS World of Science. It involved a short, interactive presentation to groups of elementary school children, asking them to think about how they and their parents travel around the city. They were also asked to identify which travel options they felt were available, and how or whether they might make use of them. Next, the students participated in a competition to build something representative of a mode of transportation out of LEGO. Entries were evaluated on a number of metrics, including the sustainability of the design. Vehicles included a triple-decker bus that could add additional levels if there was more demand, and using hydrogen or water to fuel vehicles. Three sessions were held, involving over 120 students from local schools.

The Way We Move Challenge, in contrast, was open to any member of the public. The original design of the City's LEGO model deliberately left several building sites empty. Participants then competed to build structures and vehicles to fill these sites in a manner that

best fit with the principles of *The Way We Move*. Presentations were given by City staff over a two-day weekend event to communicate the goals and objectives of *The Way We Move*. Fifty entries by over one hundred team members were submitted in total, and were judged by members of Edmonton City Council. Winners and runners-up were chosen in each of the four categories: downtown land use, mature neighbourhood land use, new neighbourhood land use, and transportation. Prizes were awarded to the winners at a session of Council in City Hall, which provided a further opportunity to highlight the initiative.



OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

One of the immediate challenges faced by the City upon approval of the new Transportation Master Plan in September 2009 was how to educate both internal and external audiences about the goals of the plan. The LEGO project served as a means of directly educating members of both groups.

Internally, several dozen City staff from across multiple departments were directly involved in preparing and presenting the display. The project was accomplished through a multidisciplinary approach that included engineers, urban planners, and communications staff. Because all aspects of the model were designed to keep the principles of *The Way We Move* in mind, even people whose sole contribution was to assemble a building understood how it fit into the bigger picture. The familiarity with the goals of the *The Way We Move* that these staff gained will be invaluable when their business areas are engaged in contributing to the implementation of *The Way We Move*. More generally, across the organization there was excitement about the project, and awareness of the *The Way We Move* was raised through internal news articles in newsletters and on the City's intranet launch page. This excitement prompted many City staff to bring their friends and families to see the display. Edmonton's City Councillors also played a valuable role in judging the competition and presenting awards. Their participation built excitement on City Council, which should help encourage future participation in public education projects specifically, and the implementation of *The Way We Move* in general.

The primary intent of the project, however, was to educate the citizens of Edmonton about *The Way We Move*, and to engage them in actively contributing to its goals. This aspect of the project was very successful; over 50,000 people saw the display in person over a two-month period, and many more heard about it through media coverage. The innovative nature of the project enabled it to reach an audience out of proportion to the amount of money spent. In total, investment in the LEGO model was approximately \$8,200, with additional support of approximately \$2,500 in in-kind loans and donations. Media interest meant that the project was featured in numerous television and radio news broadcasts (for a complete listing please see Appendix I). For comparison, a similar budget for newspaper advertisement would have barely bought a one-page advertisement for one day in a major newspaper. Popular interest in the display meant that word of mouth was also valuable in raising awareness.

In particular, the project was successful in reaching out to demographics that are typically under-represented in traditional public involvement campaigns. The nature of the LEGO display meant that it appealed to children, and through those children the City was also able to engage their parents. *The Way We Move* is a 30-year plan, which means that its outcomes will be day-to-day reality for these children as they grow up and enter their adult lives. Many of the goals of *The Way We Move* rely on significant travel behaviour change by the citizens of Edmonton, and so encouraging these kids to start thinking consciously now about their travel options and how they choose to live will be tremendously valuable in the future.

The display was very effective at illustrating how LRT can integrate into streets and neighbourhoods, and how it can be used to support mixed-use communities. As part of the implementation of *The Way We Move*, the City is currently planning to expand the LRT network to all sectors of Edmonton, which will be the key to achieving many of the goals of the plan. There has been a lot of recent public and political discussion around the nature of this expansion, particularly how it will fit into the existing urban fabric. The LEGO model provided a strong means of communicating how the City's plans for integrating LRT with mixed-use communities will work. In addition to highlighting the significance of LRT expansion, the model also explicitly illustrated the integration of better facilities for walking, cycling, and car-sharing into the transportation network. A full range of transportation options will help to achieve transportation mode shift.

Another advantage of this approach to public education was that it allowed participants to approach the idea of transportation planning at a very strategic, non-technical level. Often, citizens participate in public involvement with very specific projects or interests in mind. However, because the LEGO project was friendly, easy to relate to, and broad in scope, citizens were able to gain insight into how the plan as a whole fits together, and how making better travel choices will contribute to the goals of *The Way We Move*. Further, this approach meant that citizens were able to consider their travel behaviour without becoming overwhelmed by the choices and their implications.

CONCLUSION

The City of Edmonton's LEGO display was just the first part of a comprehensive program of public education that will form a cornerstone of the implementation of *The Way We Move*. This program will use a social marketing approach as a means of educating Edmontonians about travel options. It will encourage them to help achieve the *The Way We Move* through the choices they make, both when they travel and when they make big decisions in their life, such as buying a house or a car, or choosing where to live or work.

Other cities across Canada are faced with similar challenges to those here in Edmonton. As they work towards environmental, social, and financial sustainability by shifting away from automobile-dependent urban form and infrastructure, they too will be looking for ways to engage their citizens in a discussion about travel behaviour.

The City of Edmonton's LEGO display serves as an excellent example for them to follow. For a relatively modest cost, the project reached out to a large number of citizens, specifically targeting demographics that are typically hard to reach, and did so in a manner that generated a great deal of media interest. Most importantly, the City's message came through in a manner that was approachable, interesting, and easy to understand.



APPENDIX I
SUMMARY OF MEDIA COVERAGE

INTERNAL

City LINK - November 15, 2010

PRINT

Edmonton Sun - November 22, 2010
 24 Hours - November 22, 2010
 Edmonton Examiner - November 24, 2010
 Alberta Filipino Journal - November, 2010

RADIO

630 CHED - November 20, 2010
 iNews 880 - November 22, 2010

TELEVISION

Global TV Edmonton - November 5, 2010
 Global TV Saskatoon - November 5, 2010
 CTV Edmonton - November 20, 2010
 Global TV Edmonton - November 20, 2010
 CityTV - November 22, 2010

APPENDIX II
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS



City staff volunteer their lunch hour to assemble the model



The Mayor and members of City Council pose with some of *The Way We Move* Challenge winners