



# **A BOAT RAMP TO NOWHERE**

**A PROPOSAL FOR ACCESS TO HARVIE PASSAGE**

**A Presentation to the City of Calgary**

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**Presented by: Peter Crowe-Swords**

**Bow River Trout Foundation**



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### **Background:**

The Bow River Trout Foundation, as a member of Calgary River Users' Alliance, worked with the City of Calgary in 2016 to develop a plan to enhance the public's access to Calgary's rivers. The outcome was the River Access Strategy approved by Calgary City Council<sup>(1)</sup>. A priority ranking<sup>(2)</sup> placed West Baker Park, Sunnyside, Inglewood Bridge, Ogden Bridge and Graves Bridge as high priorities for immediate improvement.

For the fishing community, trailered boat access ramps create access for drift boats and fishing opportunities throughout the city. Increasing access in Calgary's western and central districts will double the amount of fishable water from a drift boat inside the city. This is an important improvement for Calgary's commercial fishing guides to retain tourists for an extra day in Calgary. Potentially it could add millions to the city's tourism revenues.

The redevelopment of Harvie Passage by the Government of Alberta creates another option for river float trips within Calgary. The development is integrated into the Western Irrigation District Weir and is planned to be reopened to the public in the summer of 2018<sup>(3)</sup>. Harvie Passage will improve passage for boaters, including fishing boats. It will also be a destination for recreation and competitive paddlers. It is expected that the facility will be used as a rafting and swimming location for the general public.

The City of Calgary is in the process of developing a regional park on the west bank of the Bow River in the Inglewood district. The Bend-in-the-Bow Park will integrate the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Pearce Estate Park, the Sam Livingstone Fish Hatchery and Harvie Passage into a multi-faceted wildlife, culture and recreational use area<sup>(4)</sup>. Phase One of this development, the enhancement to the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, is complete.

Phase Two development is an integral part of river access in this region of the city. Phase Two encompasses an established river access ramp at Cushing Bridge, the use of which is currently restricted to the city's emergency services, a parking lot that services the fish hatchery, current recreation use within Pearce Estate Park and the new Harvie Passage Whitewater Park.

### **River Access in Central Calgary:**

With the development of the West Baker Park trailer boat launch and other launch sites in the city centre, the boat traffic down the Bow River to Harvie Passage will be increasing over the next several years. The float time from the West Baker Park launch site to Harvie Passage is over 5 hours. Beyond Harvie Passage the next trailer boat ramp is at Graves Bridge (Glenmore Trail) another 2 hours beyond Harvie Passage.

There is a critical need to develop the trailer boat launch at Inglewood that will allow drift boats to egress the river above Harvie Passage. This boat launch was planned for construction in 2018, to coincide with the opening of Harvie Passage, but that has been delayed until 2019 or 2020 when the 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE bridge boat ramp in Inglewood will be installed. A boat ramp has been constructed into the outflow of Harvie Passage Low Flow Channel offers an alternative egress point.



# A Boat Ramp to Nowhere

## A Proposal for Access to Harvie Passage

Access to the river below Harvie Passage should be in the vicinity of Harvie Passage or the Cushing Bridge (17<sup>th</sup> Ave SE). This will allow drift boats to launch close to the top end of the river reach running through the SE quadrant of the city.

### Trailer Boat Launch Ramps:

There are 2 single lane trailer boat launches that are already constructed between Harvie Passage and the Cushing Bridge. The original boat launch is located next to the Cushing Bridge. This boat ramp is restricted to Calgary Fire Department (CFD) and is not available for public use. In addition to the CFD restriction, access is problematic because it crosses the Bow River pathway. This is a high use pedestrian and bicycle transit route with an obstructed view for bikers travelling under Cushing Bridge. If this site was to be made available to the public, the boat ramp would have to be twinned for public use next to the CFD ramp.

A new “Boat Ramp to Nowhere” was built as part of the Harvie Passage project below the Low Water Channel. This single lane boat launch is grouted in place and is a very robust facility that will serve the city for years with minimal maintenance. It is well suited for public use with parking close at hand where construction was staged for Harvie Passage. Unfortunately there is no public vehicle access to this boat launch.



*Harvie Passage “Boat Ramp to Nowhere”*

### Vehicle Access:

The use of either one of the boat launches is complicated by the land use within and adjacent to the Bend-in-the-Bow Park and the So-Bow condominium development.

1. Currently there is a paved road allowance adjacent to 17 Ave SE/Cushing Bridge and the SoBow Condo Development down to a single lane boat ramp next to the Bridge. This access could lead directly to Cushing Bridge boat launch or it could be extended upstream to the Harvie Passage boat launch.



# A Boat Ramp to Nowhere

## A Proposal for Access to Harvie Passage



*Harvie Passage roadway access options*

2. An alternative would be a roadway access from the Pearce Estate parking lot along the park boundary fence on the north side of the SoBow development. This roadway would replace the construction service road that is being used by the Alberta Government to access the Low Water Channel. The roadway would cross the Bow River pathway at an open area that allows for bicycle and pedestrian traffic to avoid vehicles backing down to the water with their trailers.





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## A Proposal for Access to Harvie Passage

*Proposed roadway running along Pearce Estate Park southern boundary between the parking lot and Harvie Passage*

### **Parking and Staging Area:**

A staging area for boat launching and parking is the 3<sup>rd</sup> requirement for a functional river access facility. The Calgary River Access Strategy – Priority 2, Sites and Initiatives proposed the redevelopment of the Cushing Bridge - Harvie Passage Site with the addition of a new boat ramp, improved access to the boat ramp, parking and upgrades to other amenities such as changing rooms and toilets. The time line is 2019 to 2022.

The logical location for a Parking area and Staging site is in the gravelled area that has been used for the past 2 years as a staging area for the reconstruction of the Harvie Passage Low Water Channel. It is only 100 meters from the end of the Low Water Channel and the “Boat Ramp to Nowhere”. This site has space for 50+ vehicles and adequate room for vehicles with trailers. It is already a disturbed site with easy access to city services, linked trails and roads. There is a minimal cost for creating a good parking and staging area.

Without parking and staging, the Harvie Passage users will be forced to utilize the Pearce Estate/Sam Livingstone Fish Hatchery parking lot which is already well used. This will cause increased conflict between river users and park users with boaters changing clothes in the parking lot and dragging their boats through the natural area.



*Bottom of LWC in Harvie Passage with Drift Boat moving past the kayakers waiting to play in the wave on left of picture*



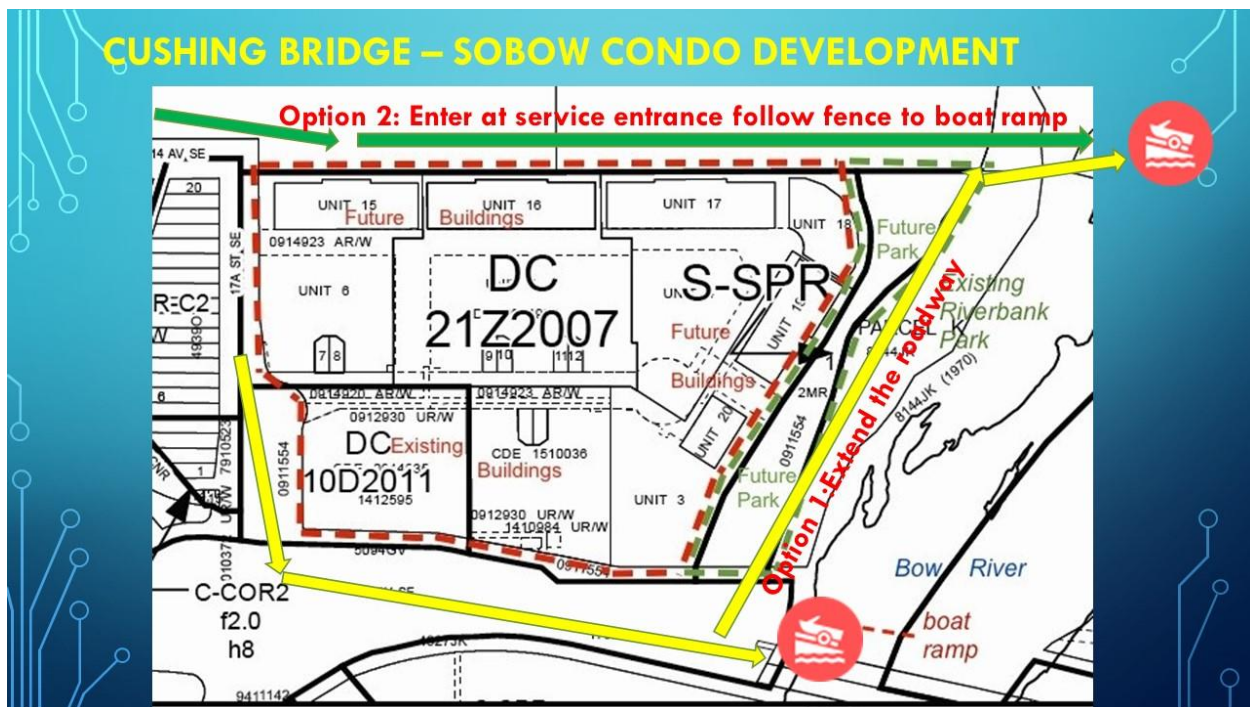
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## A Proposal for Access to Harvie Passage

### The Challenge:

The focus of our engagement with the Bend-in-the-Bow Park Phase II development project has been to assure that public trailered-boat access to the river and the needs for convenient access to the Harvie Passage Whitewater Park are met. The challenge with the park development appears to be integrating river users' needs into those for protection of existing natural area in Pearce Estate Park and the SoBow condominium development. We believe that there are two options that have the potential to balance stakeholder interests. Given the intransigence of the Calgary Fire Department to allow access to the Cushing Bridge boat ramp makes the use of the Harvie Passage "Boat Ramp to Nowhere" the only option for a boat ramp.

**Option 1:** Use the existing right of way from 11A Street SE traffic circle on the north side of SoBow Condo Development, running east adjacent to 17 Avenue SE to a point east of the river bank Pathway. The roadway would extend north on land allocated for future city park development to where it would reach the southern boundary of Pearce Estate Park and then transcend the Pathway to a staging area and boat ramp at the outflow for Harvie Passage Low Flow Channel. Four important features of this proposal are the current roadway is in place or added to undeveloped land, a wildlife corridor is maintained adjacent to the river, a visible roadway intersection with the Pathway and the Calgary Fire Department would retain the Cushing Bridge boat ramp for emergency use.



**Option 2:** A new public roadway on the southern boundary of Pearce Estate Park, crossing the Pathway at the same location as Option 1. This proposal would give the most direct link between the Pearce Estate parking lot and Harvie Passage. Would not appreciably impact current park character, alleviate pressure on park facilities and congestion and move vehicle traffic away from the 17 Ave SE road allowance.



# A Boat Ramp to Nowhere

## A Proposal for Access to Harvie Passage



A comparison of the two options and deciding which is most desirable for all stakeholders will depend on land use restrictions and development costs. But from a river user viewpoint, the more direct route outlined in Option 2 would be preferred but development costs and timelines may be the limiting factor. Option 1 would appear to be an immediate development possibility with a relatively low cost but is complicated by current roadway access off 11A Street access.

Regardless of the complications with site development, it is clear that public as well as emergency road access to Harvie Passage is paramount preceding the opening of the Low Flow Channel in July 2018. Therefore, river access infrastructure needs an immediate resolution.

The Harvie Passage Low Flow Channel completion will allow the entire city reach of the Bow River to be floated. But there is a shortfall in trailered boat river access and together with the stalled development of Bend-in-the-Bow Phase 2 Project, a shortfall of amenities in the general vicinity of Harvie Passage when opened in the summer of 2018.

Our belief is that with some creative thinking, consultation and consideration of alternative funding, this river access site can reach its full potential in short order

Peter Crowe-Swords

Bow River Trout Foundation

27 November 2017

### Reference:

1. Calgary River Access Strategy, Parks Department, City of Calgary, February, 2017.
2. Calgary River Access Strategy – Priority Sites & Proposed Funding, February 2017
3. Harvie Passage – Reconstruction, Recreation, Challenges. Alberta Transportation, January 2016
4. Bend-in-the Bow Grand Vision, Parks Department, City of Calgary, October 2016