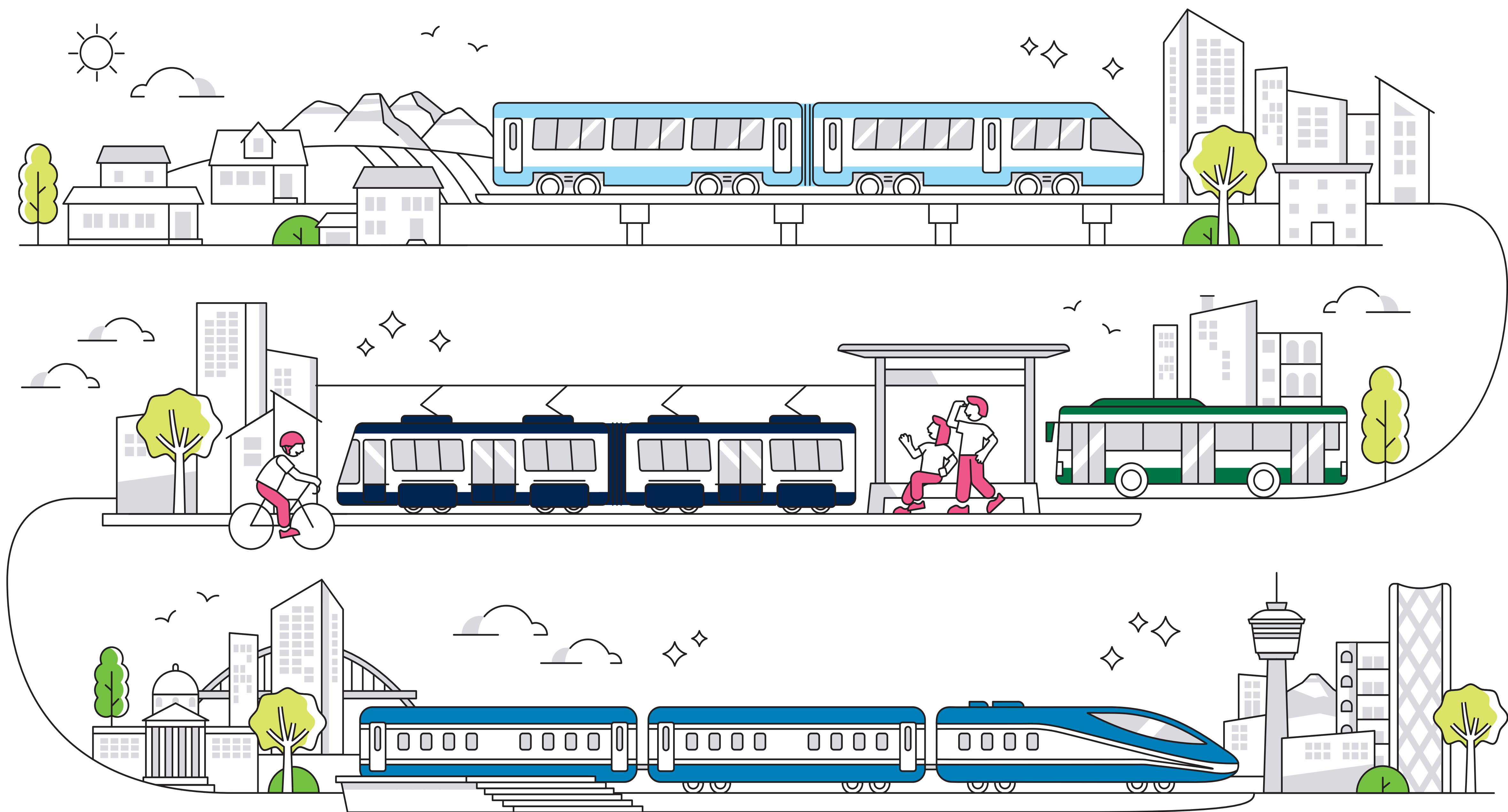


# Alberta's Passenger Rail Master Plan

## Open House Material

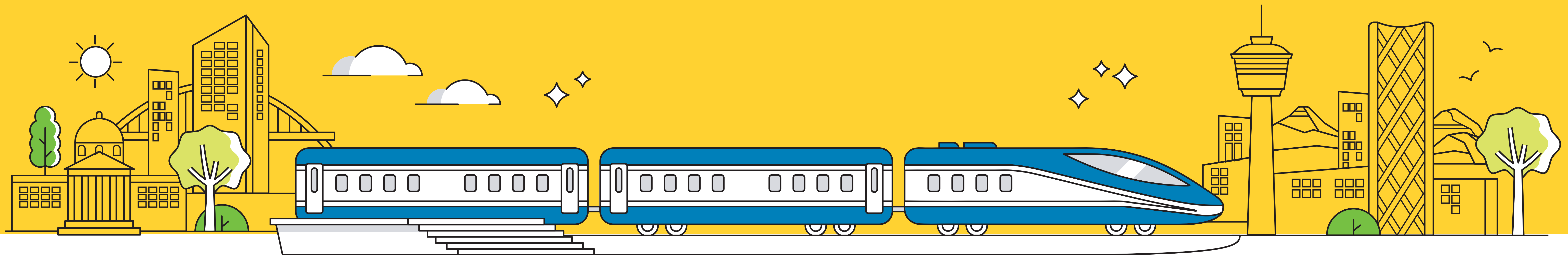
March 2025



# Station One

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## Indigenous Engagement





# Land Acknowledgment

In the spirit of reconciliation, we respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional gathering place of the peoples of Treaties 6, 7, and 8. These lands have been, and continue to be, travelling routes, and meeting grounds for Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. We recognize the deep history and connection of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples with these lands, and we commit to partnership, collaboration, and friendship as we envision a shared future together.

# Path to Reconciliation

## Acknowledging Past Harms

The Province recognizes the inequitable history of rail development and its negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples.

## Commitment to Reconciliation

Alberta's government is committed to collaborating with Indigenous communities and walking a path toward reconciliation together.

## Early Engagement

The Province seeks to understand Indigenous perspectives on various areas, including land use, cultural practices, community well-being, economic development, environmental concerns, and transportation needs.





# Indigenous Engagement Overview

## Early Engagement

Indigenous communities and organizations are actively engaged to help shape a vision for the Passenger Rail Master Plan.

## Open Communication

Ongoing, transparent dialogue with Indigenous communities is prioritized to ensure their perspectives are integrated into the plan.

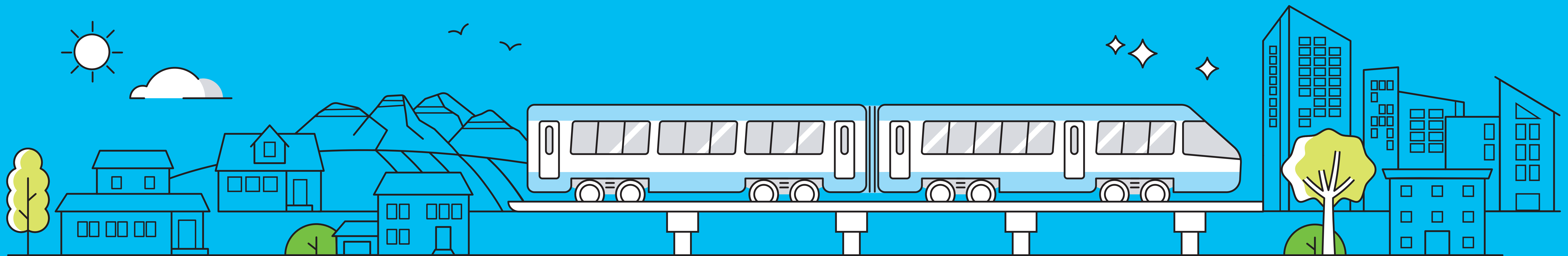
## Relationship Building

The engagement process fosters mutual understanding and strengthens relationships with Indigenous communities.

# Station Two

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## Background & Overview



# Why We Are Here

On April 29, 2024, Premier Danielle Smith and Minister Devin Dreeshen announced an ambitious vision for advancing passenger rail as part of an integrated provincial transportation system in Alberta with the development of a Passenger Rail Master Plan.

This announcement followed Minister Dreeshen's July 2023 Mandate Letter and the October 2023 Throne Speech prioritizing the exploration of feasibility and implementation of passenger rail services in Alberta.

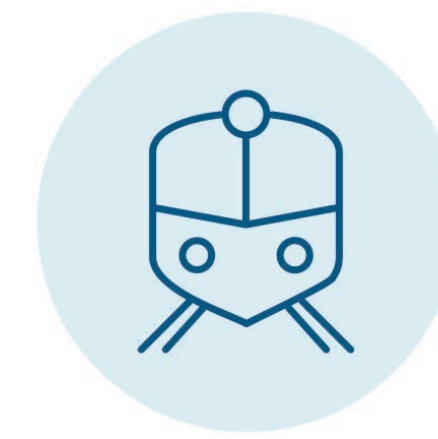
**The Vision as shared on April 29, 2024 is for an Alberta passenger rail system that includes public, private, or hybrid delivery and operation of passenger rail, including:**



## Commuter rail

A commuter rail system for the Calgary area that connects surrounding communities and the Calgary International Airport to downtown.

A commuter rail system for the Edmonton area that connects surrounding communities and the Edmonton International Airport to downtown.



## Regional rail lines

A regional rail line between Calgary and Edmonton, with a local transit hub in Red Deer.

Regional rail lines between our major cities, Calgary and Edmonton, and the Rocky Mountain parks.



## Crown corporation

Coordinated governance to develop the infrastructure, oversee daily operations, develop a fare collection / booking system, keep up with system maintenance, and plan for future system expansion.



## Municipal-led LRT systems

Light rail transit systems in Calgary and Edmonton that connect with the provincial passenger rail system.

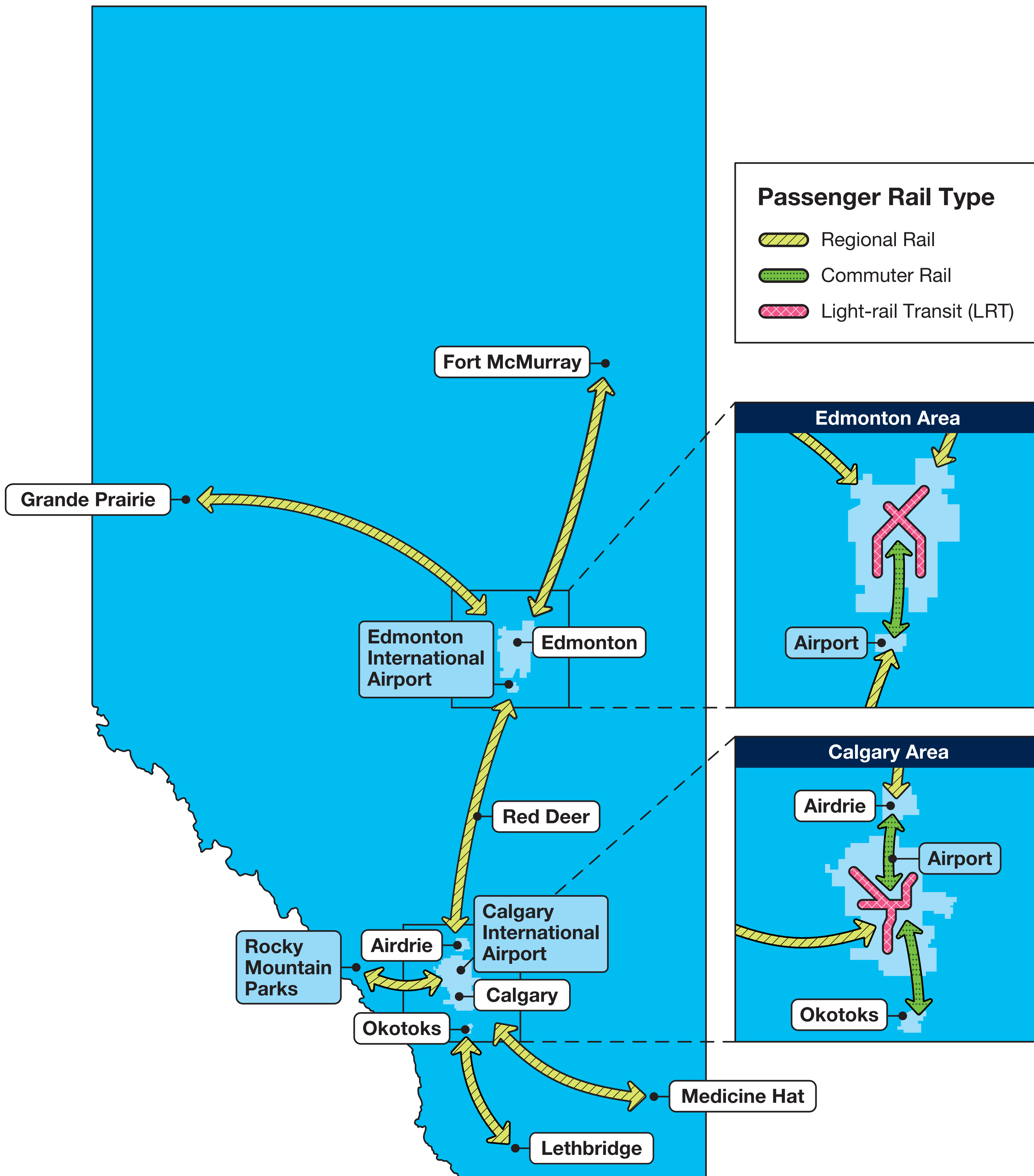


## Multi-modal hubs

Provide links in major cities between commuter rail systems, regional rail routes and municipal-led mass transit systems.

# Alberta's Vision for Passenger Rail

As announced on April 29, 2024



# Crystallizing the Vision with Albertans

All parts of a passenger rail network need to work together to maximize benefits for Albertans.

Accordingly, the Government of Alberta is developing a Passenger Rail Master Plan to build out the optimal passenger rail network for Alberta. This is the first step on a journey to implement passenger rail in Alberta.

**We want to hear from you as we crystallize the Vision for passenger rail in the province.**

Understanding how Albertans envision the future of travel and passenger rail is a key input to our work.

To share your thoughts after today:



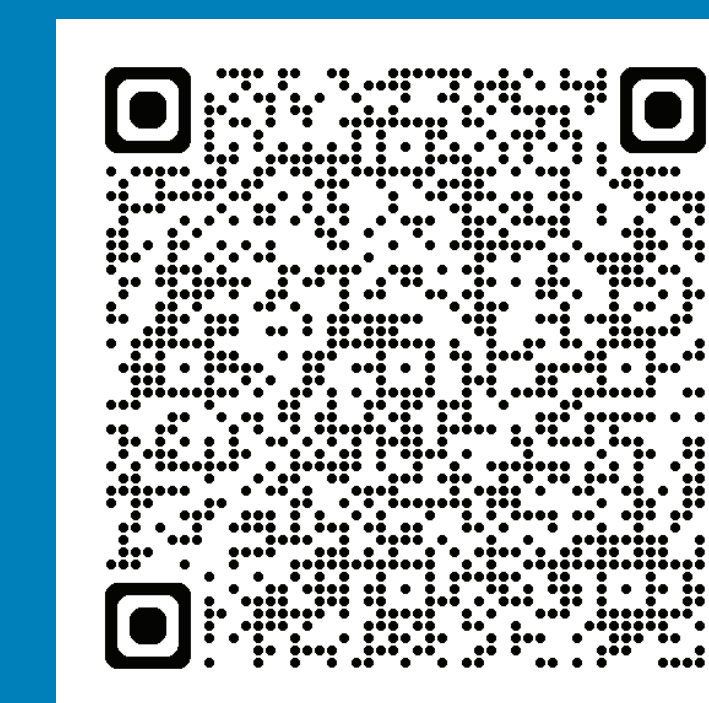
Visit

[alberta.ca/passenger-rail](https://alberta.ca/passenger-rail)



Email

[PassengerRail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:PassengerRail@gov.ab.ca)

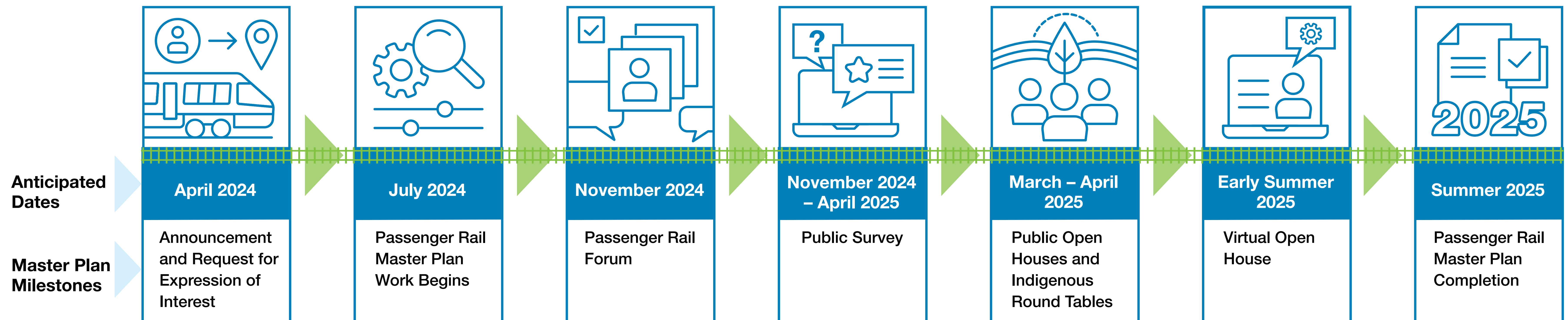


**Please take a moment to answer our survey questions!**

# Passenger Rail Master Plan Timeline

The Passenger Rail Master Plan will look forward decades to identify concrete actions that can be taken now and future actions to build the optimal passenger rail system for the province. This work will ensure government has the required information to make decisions on the next steps to advance passenger rail in the province, building on the strong public mass transit systems in Calgary and Edmonton.

In April 2024, a procurement process was initiated for the development of a comprehensive Passenger Rail Master Plan, generating significant interest from industry and Albertans.



# What We've Learned So Far: Passenger Rail Forum

On November 22, 2024, the Government of Alberta hosted the **Passenger Rail Forum** to engage stakeholders in shaping Alberta's transportation future.

**Purpose:** Provide the province, industry, and communities the ability to collaborate and share information on passenger rail development; and discuss opportunities and challenges.

**186** | **33**  
registrants | speakers

Representing **perspectives and best practices** from



Canada



and around  
the world

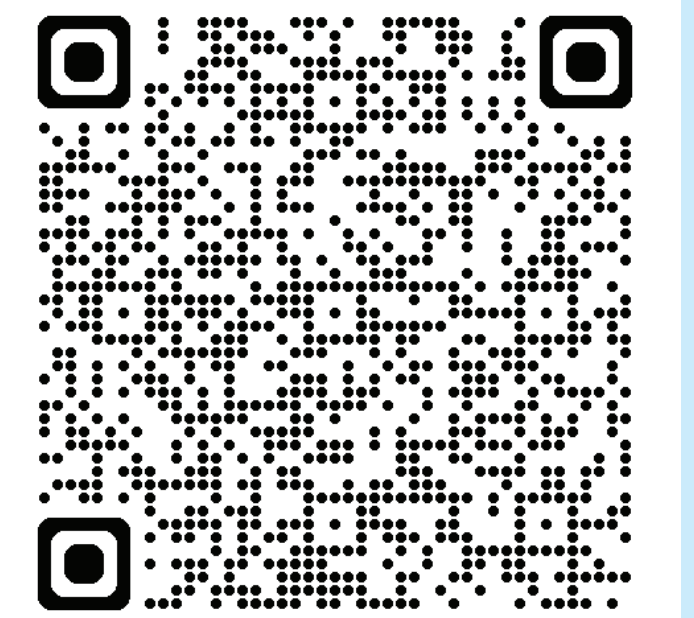
## Presenters included:

- Alstom  
Rail manufacturer and operator
- California State Transportation Agency
- Central Japan Railway Company
- Deutsche Bahn  
Germany's national railway
- FS Group  
Italy's national railway
- Metrolinx  
Toronto region transit agency
- REM  
Montreal's light metro system
- Renfe Group  
Spain's national railway



## Lessons learned included:

- **Start with the end in mind:** Take the time to define your goals and plan your network before building it.
- **Work together:** Meaningfully engage Indigenous communities, local communities, and stakeholders, including freight railways, early and regularly, to understand their interests and how to support them.
- **Rail is transformative:** It can unlock opportunities for development, job creation, and increased regional connectivity and housing access.
- **One size doesn't fit all:** Globally, governments rely on public, private, and hybrid models to ensure resilient and effective delivery and operations of passenger rail.
- **Tried and true technology:** Passenger rail can encourage people to shift from driving to a more environmentally sustainable mode. Innovative technologies, such as hydrogen-powered trains, can be implemented to reduce the environmental impact of train operations.



Watch the  
Forum highlights  
video

Alberta

# What We've Learned So Far: Public Survey

A public survey was released on

## November 22, 2024

to gather thoughts and opinions of Albertans on the Passenger Rail Master Plan.



Promoted online



and in 17 **Albertan newspapers**

# 14,300+ responses

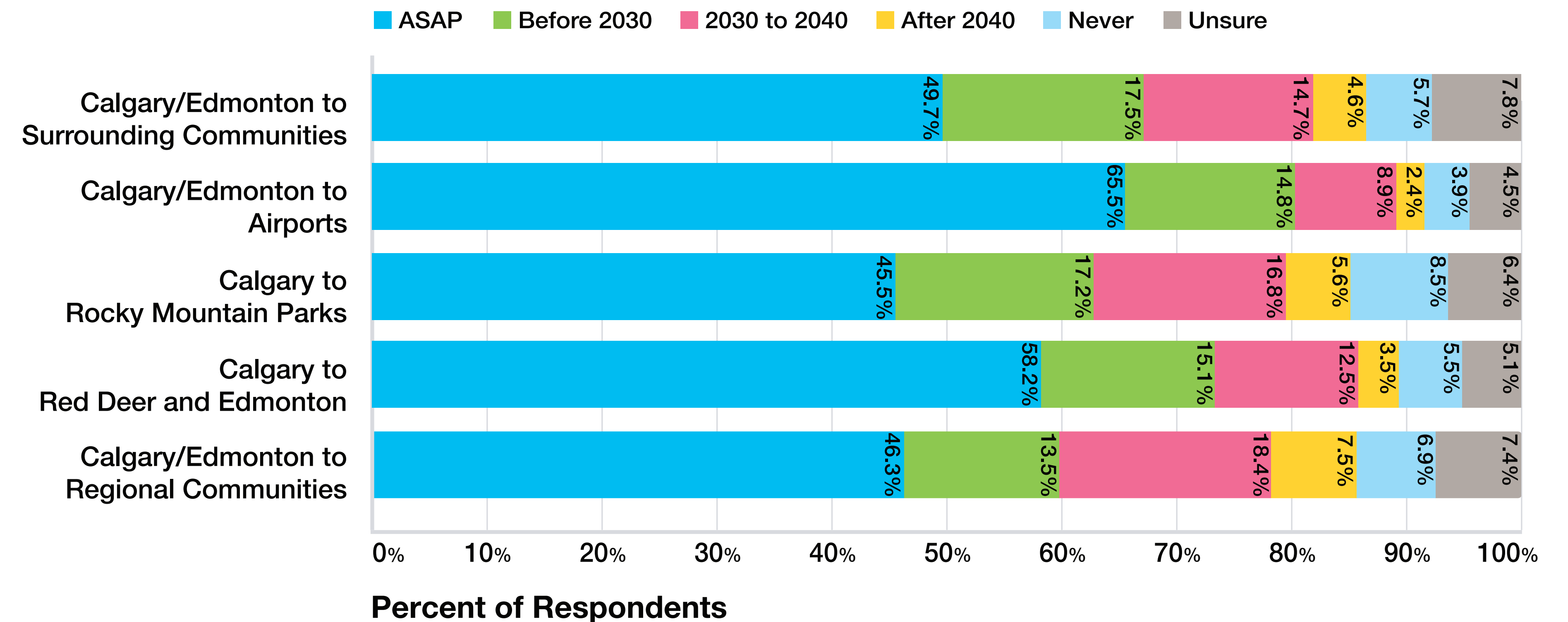
by December 20, 2024 with a good geographic and age distribution of respondents.

**80%** of respondents think government should be involved in ownership and operations of passenger rail.

Close to **90%** of respondents support continued investment from the Province in municipal LRTs.

## How soon would you prioritize the following rail services?

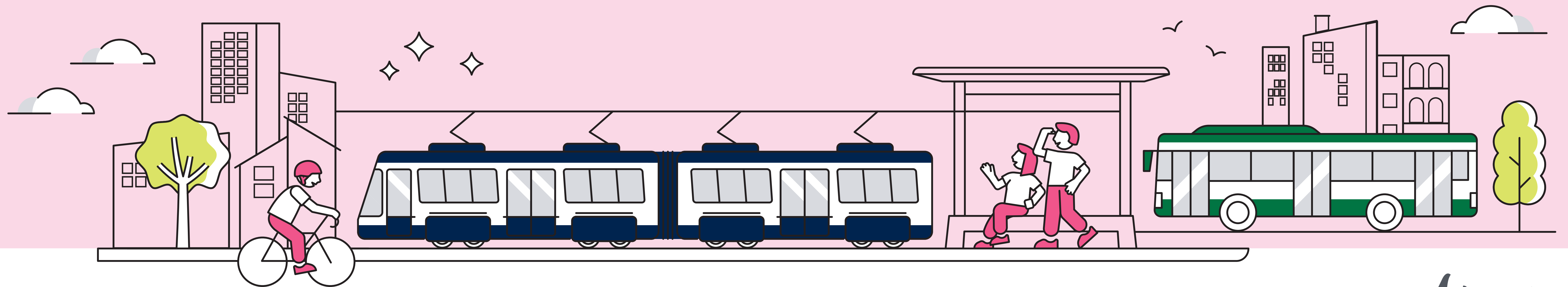
14,383 total responses. 26% (3,787) of respondents selected ASAP for all options.



- Respondents indicated that the airport connections are their highest priority, followed by the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor.
- 60 to 80% of respondents would like to see passenger rail service delivered within the next five years.
- The connection to Rocky Mountain Parks received the least amount of support.

# Station Three

A Future that Runs on Rails



# Building on Alberta's Legacy

## Before 1700

Natural trails, along rivers and tributaries and through valleys, formed important travel and trade routes for First Nations long before European contact. For example, the Cree, Blackfoot, and other tribes strategically crossed the Red Deer River at locations such as 'the Crossing' (west of present-day Red Deer), a point west of present-day Innisfail, and near the Blindman River's mouth (present-day Blackfalds).



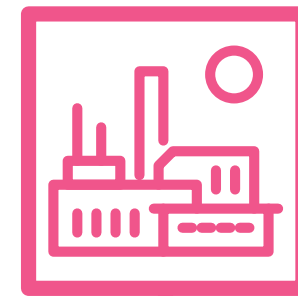
## From 1730

Early European explorers, fur traders, and settlers later adopted these same natural trails, as formal trade routes become the present-day highways and train tracks that we see today.



## 1882 – 1883

Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) expands across Alberta, leading to significant urban development and population growth.



## 1885

CPR expands from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge to transport coal; Canada's first national park, now known as Banff National Park, was established.



## 1905 – 1919

Additional railway expansion in the province by the Canadian Northern Railway and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, both of which were consolidated into the federally owned Canadian National Railways (CNR).



## From 1970s

Edmonton and Calgary led the development of the first Light Rail Transit (LRT) in North America with populations under one million people, and now punch above their weight in passenger rail transit.



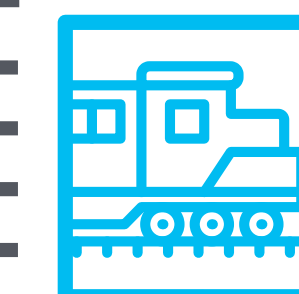
## 1969

The Alberta Government completes the Alberta Resource Railway between Hinton and Grande Prairie with CNR managing operations.



## 1965

CNR completes the Great Slave Lake Railway connecting Alberta to the Northwest Territories.



## Present

Expanded LRT systems in Edmonton and Calgary now collectively provide over 100 million trips annually. VIA and Rocky Mountaineer services draw tourists to Alberta, generating economic activity.



# The Time is Right for Passenger Rail

**4.8 million** people call Alberta home.

The population of Alberta could more than double in **60 years.**

As of October 2024, Alberta added close to

**190,000**

people year-over-year, equivalent to nearly double the current population of Red Deer.

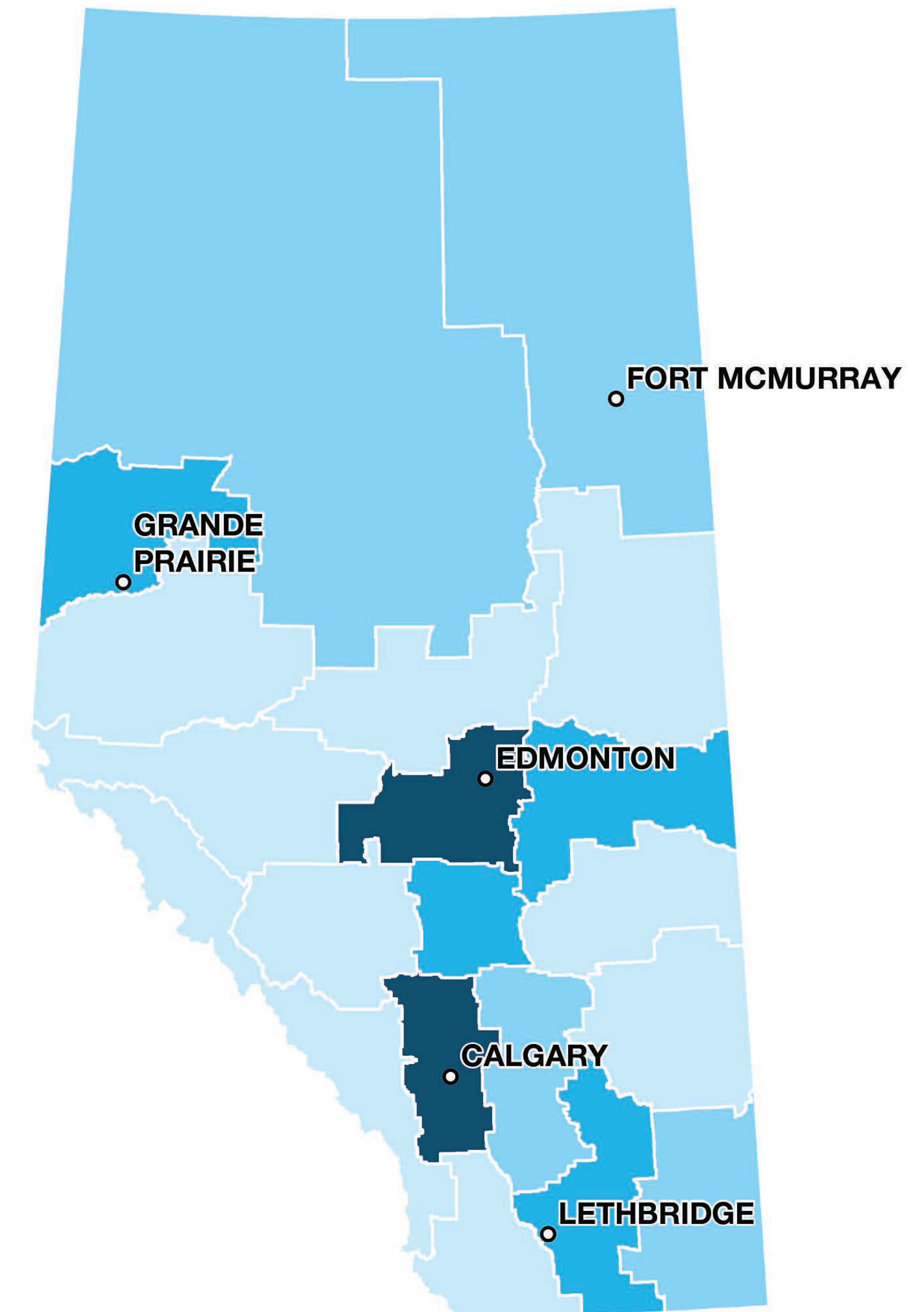
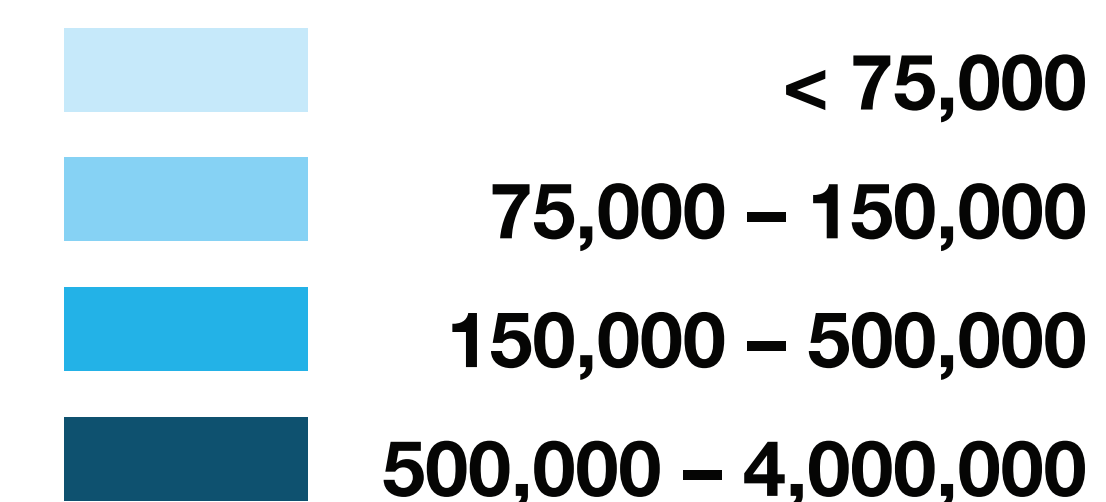
## Without more transportation options:

- The livability and economic development of Alberta will be constrained.
- Traffic congestion will increase with negative environmental consequences.
- Access to jobs and recreation will become more challenging.

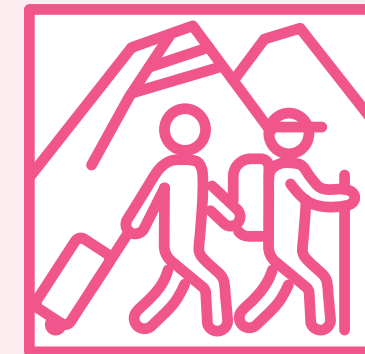
## Projected Population in 60 Years

**86%** of Alberta's future population is focused in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.

Population by Census Division

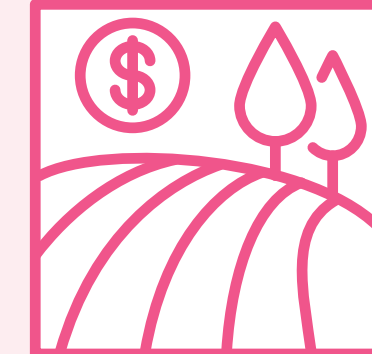


# Passenger Rail is a Conduit for Economic Growth



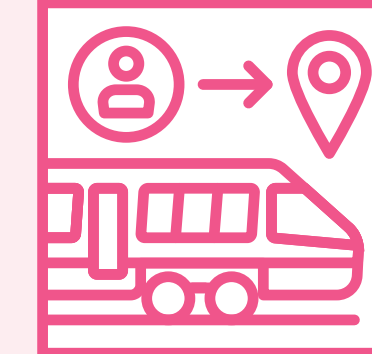
## Tourism Expansion

Passenger rail can attract tourists, boost local economies, and promote regional attractions.



## New Development Opportunities

Lands surrounding passenger rail and passenger rail stations can become more attractive for investment and development.



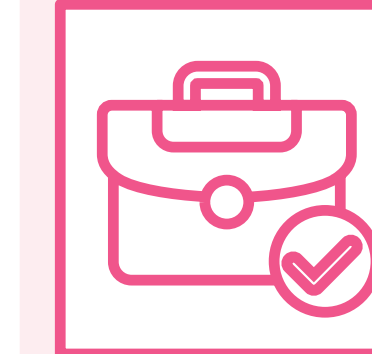
## Increased Business Activity

Passenger rail usually creates more compact and denser neighbourhoods around stations, with a mix of housing, retail, offices, and other businesses. This leads to a more efficient use of resources and to increased business activity.



## Balanced Economic Development

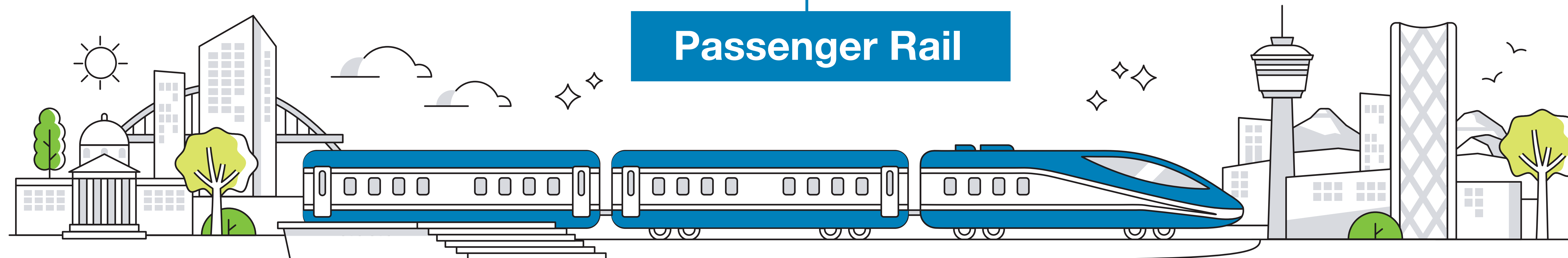
Passenger rail can contribute to long-term economic development by reducing transportation costs, improving accessibility, and fostering innovation.



## Labour Capacity Building

Building and operating the network will require specialized skills, which will attract talent to the region and encourage investment in skills development and training for Albertans. Passenger rail in Alberta can create job opportunities, enhance workforce skills, and stimulate economic diversification.

## Passenger Rail



# Passenger Rail in a Transportation Network

More transportation options = more freedom to travel the way you like!

By combining different transportation modes to get everyone where they need to go, we can build a more resilient transportation network, limit congestion and pollution, and improve safety and Alberta's economy.



## You may choose to drive if:

- ✔ You need door-to-door access.
- ✔ You are transporting a big or heavy item.
- ✔ You have no convenient alternative.
- ✔ You want to control your itinerary.

## But you might:

- ✘ Get delayed in traffic or poor road conditions.
- ✘ Contribute to road congestion.
- ✘ Need to look and/or pay for parking.



## You may choose to take the train if:

- ✔ You need to multitask.
- ✔ You don't or can't drive.
- ✔ You want a predictable schedule.
- ✔ You travel light.

## But you might:

- ✘ Need to walk, bike, drive or take a bus, LRT, or taxi to/from the station.
- ✘ Have to share space with others.
- ✘ Adapt to the train schedule.

## Alberta's Vision includes three types of passenger rail:



### Light Rail Transit (LRT)

Urban passenger rail transit that typically operates small, frequent trains in an urban area.

e.g. Calgary CTrain, Edmonton LRT



### Commuter Rail

Passenger rail service that primarily operates within a metropolitan region, connecting commuters to downtown from adjacent suburbs, commuter towns, existing LRT services, and local airports.

e.g. GO Train/UP Express (Toronto), West Coast Express (Vancouver)

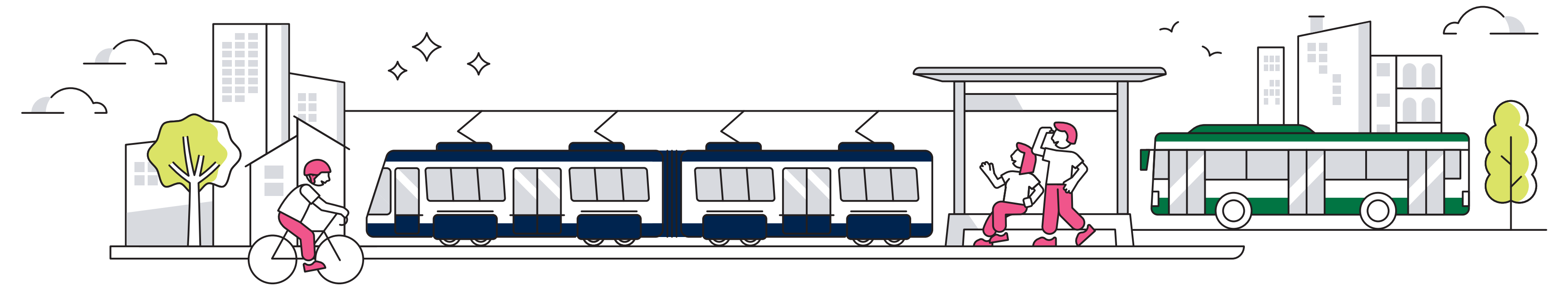


### Regional Rail

Passenger rail service that connects communities typically more than 100 km apart at speeds up to 150 km/h (conventional rail) or greater than 250 km/h (High Speed Rail, HSR).

e.g. VIA Rail (conventional rail); Amtrak Acela or French TGV (HSR)

# A Thriving Alberta



Albertans are known as bold, innovative thinkers who move fast to solve big challenges.

By planning for the future and taking early action, we can ensure that Alberta continues to thrive as a leading province and offer Canadians an exceptional place to call home.

Development of passenger rail in Alberta will foster growth of the province while offering Albertans sustainable and resilient travel options to get to work, visit family and friends, and explore the outdoors.



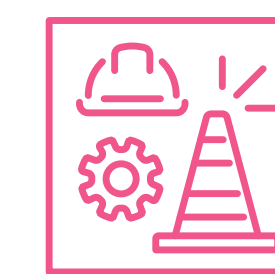
Which benefit are you most looking forward to? Place a dot sticker.



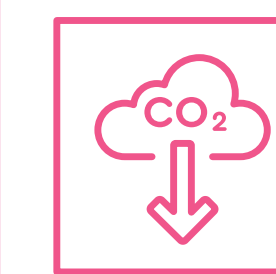
Affordable transportation alternatives



Avoid traffic congestion



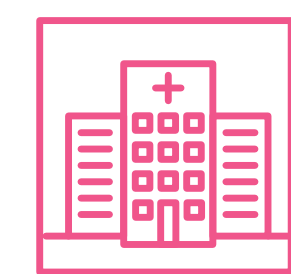
Safe transportation



Reduced emissions



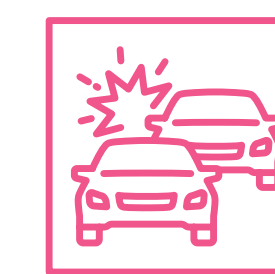
Easier access to the mountains



More convenient travel to services (healthcare, education, etc.)



Reduced traffic on roads



Fewer road accidents



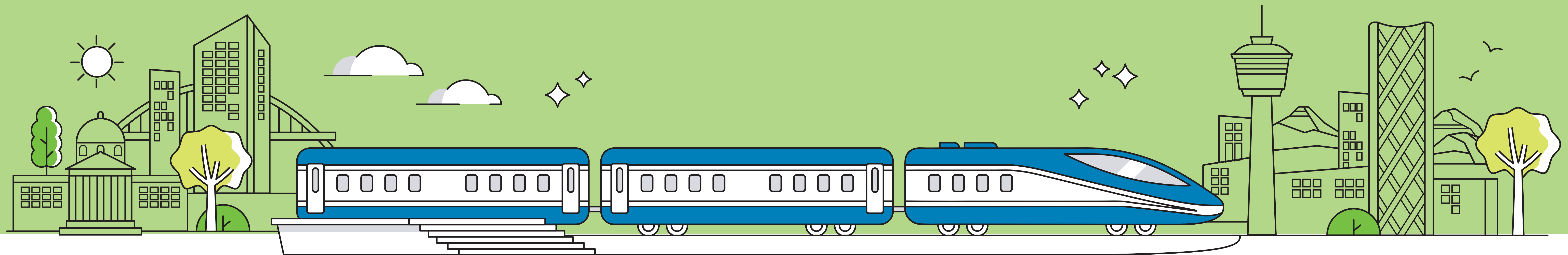
Economic growth



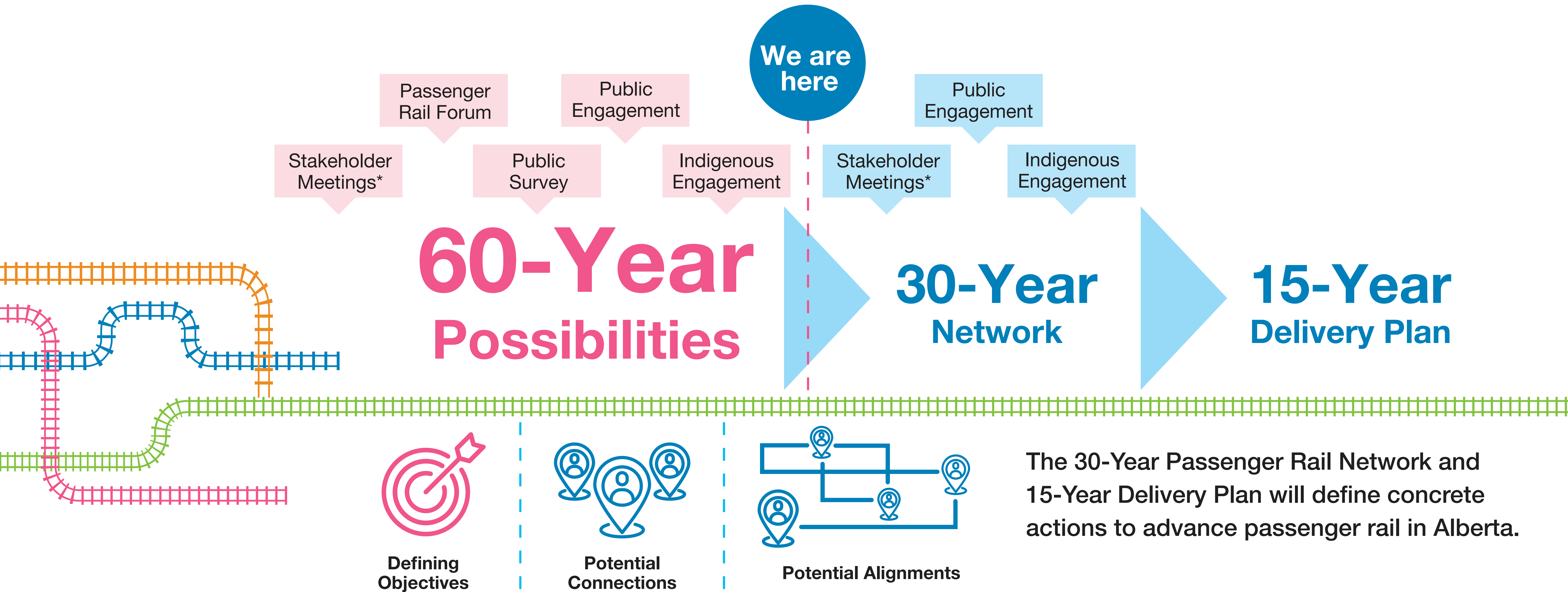
Increased tourism revenue

# Station Four

Work to Date (up to February 2025)



# Passenger Rail Master Plan Process



\*Stakeholders include: government, associations, businesses, industry, transportation providers, landowners, and other parties with interest in the study.

# Defining a Framework to Guide the Passenger Rail Master Plan

An evaluation framework aligned with global best practices and tailored to Alberta's goals was created to guide development of the Passenger Rail Master Plan.

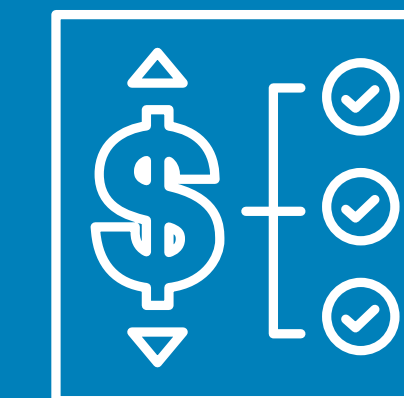
It provides a consistent, transparent, and holistic approach to support decision-making, with criteria that can evolve based on the options being considered and information for analysis.

**The evaluation framework uses four categories to assess options:**

## Strategic

Considers whether options are aligned with Alberta's goals. It includes six objectives:

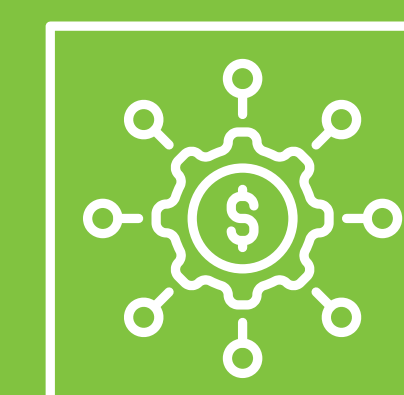
- **Connecting Albertans to jobs:** increase connectivity between where people live and work.
- **Building Alberta:** build infrastructure that supports a range of communities and destinations, and integrates passenger rail with other investments.
- **Strengthening economic activity and attracting investment:** expand transportation opportunities to enhance tourism, movement of people, and strengthen local and regional economies.
- **Building better communities:** strengthen connections to social and cultural infrastructure and support community plans and investments.
- **Building meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities:** support Indigenous communities and organizations through connections, and access to economic opportunities.
- **Ensuring the health and integrity of Alberta's environment and ecosystem:** protect the environment, reduce emissions, and increase resiliency.



## Economic

Considers the benefits generated by the options, including:

- **Social:** safety improvements, congestion reduction, and infrastructure expansion deferral (roads and highways).
- **Economic:** capturing how passenger rail connects people and places to generate economic activity.
- **Environmental:** reductions in emissions.
- **Traveller:** travel time and cost savings for passenger rail users.



## Financial

Considers whether options are affordable, including:

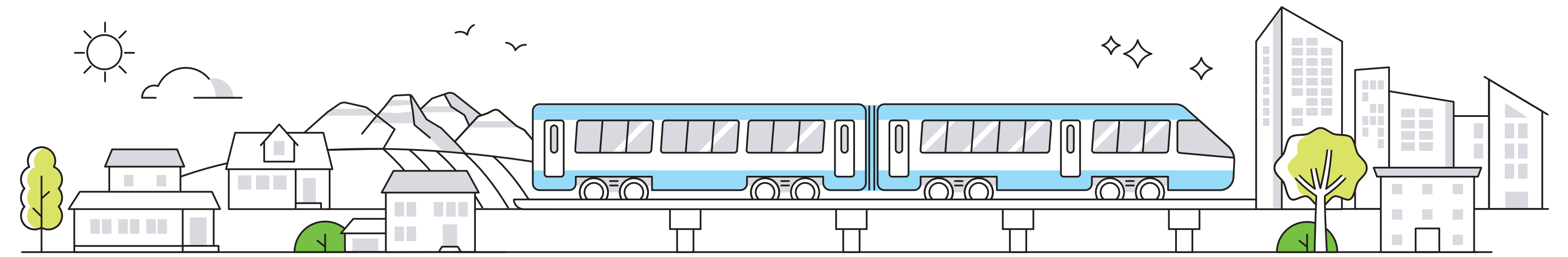
- **Capital costs:** the upfront costs to build the network and keep it in good condition over 60 years.
- **Operating and maintenance costs:** the ongoing costs of providing train services.
- **Revenues:** from fare and non-fare sources.

## Deliverability & Operations

Considers how rail infrastructure and services could be built and operated, including:

- **Constructability considerations** that will influence the ease and timeliness of building a passenger rail network.
- **Operations considerations** that influence the ability to provide a reliable passenger rail service.

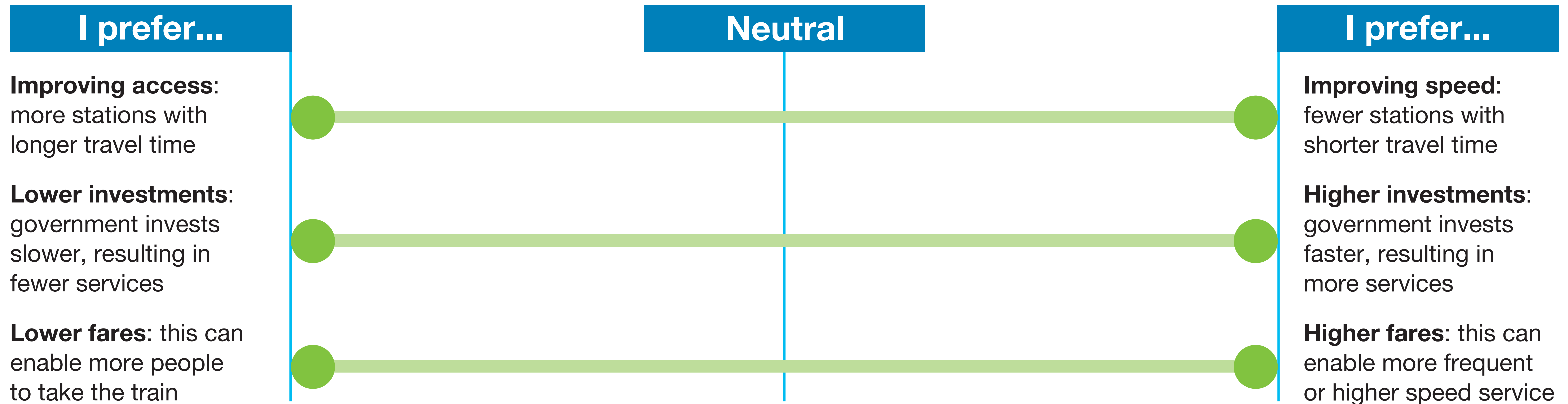
# What Do You Think?



As we develop and evaluate passenger rail connections and the Master Plan, trade-offs may be necessary to make decisions that support Albertans.

How would you approach the decisions below **related to passenger rail**?

Place a dot on the “sliding scale” to indicate your preference to resolve each **hypothetical** trade-off.



# Imagining 60 Years of Rail Possibilities

Based on the strategic objectives, a comprehensive list of potential connections were identified to imagine what Alberta's passenger rail network could look like in 60 years.

Potential connections were selected based on preliminary and high-level factors and metrics including:

- Popular tourist destinations
- Airport hubs
- Areas with medium-high population (over 10,000 in 2021)
- Travel time compared to automobile
- Potential ridership
- Potential capital costs



## **The future is uncertain.**

That is why transportation planning needs to remain flexible. We recognize that the 60-Year Possibilities may not all get built and that new connections could emerge in the future. However, identifying a set of 60-Year Possibilities provides a foundation to plan Alberta's passenger rail network.

# 60-Year Passenger Rail Possibilities

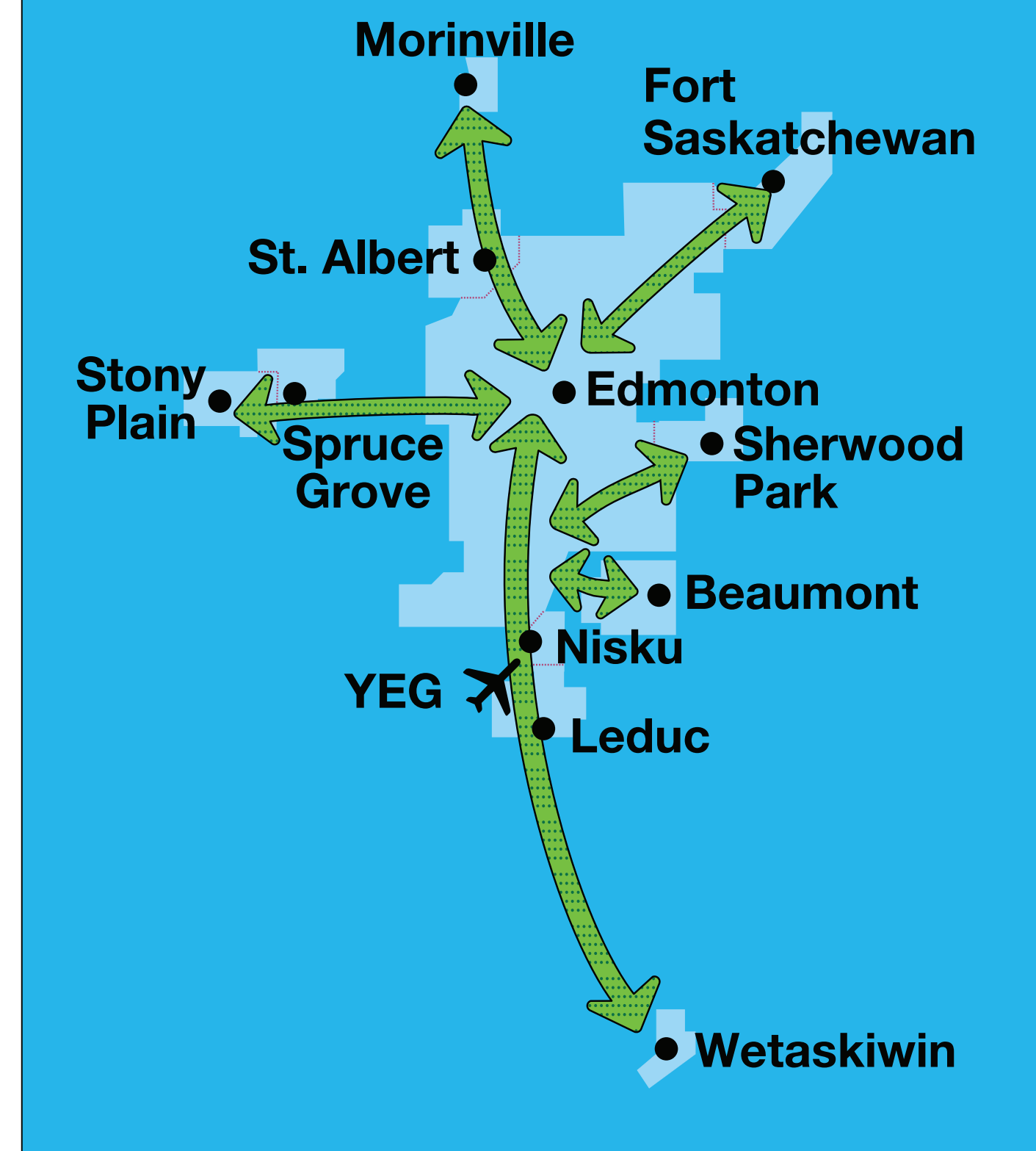
## Regional Passenger Rail



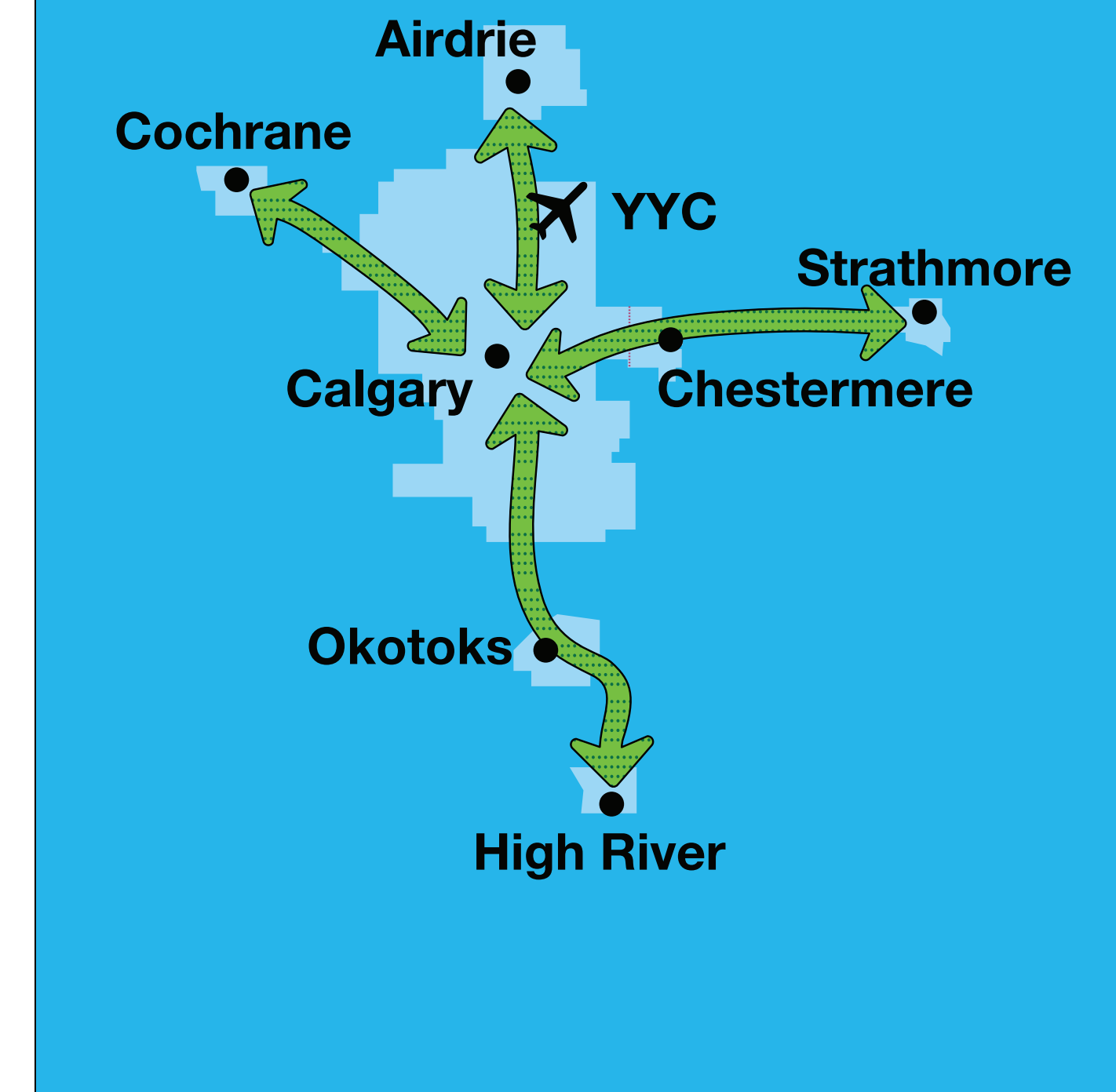
Note: Maps are conceptual and do not show exact routing.

## Commuter Rail

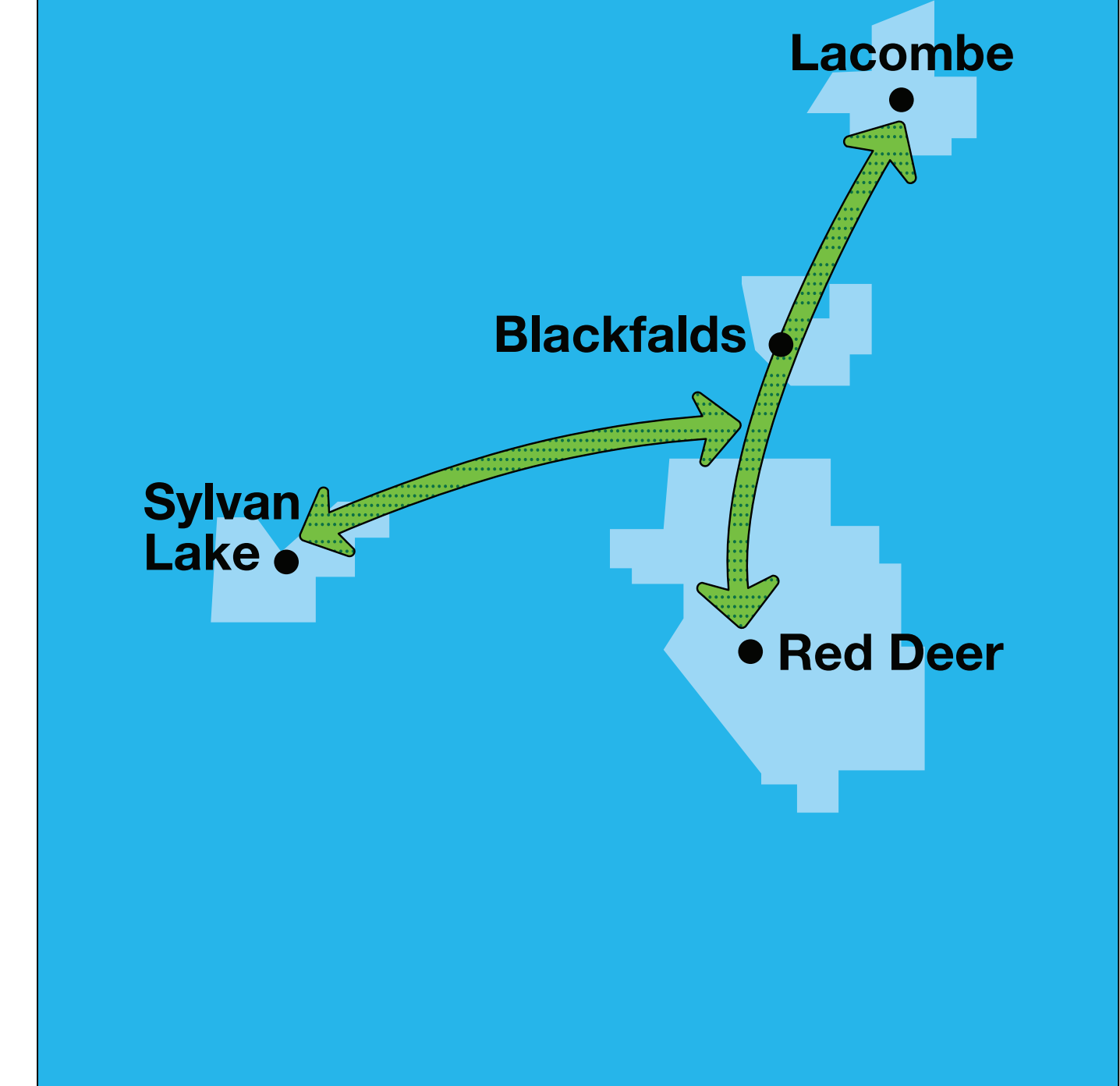
### Edmonton Area

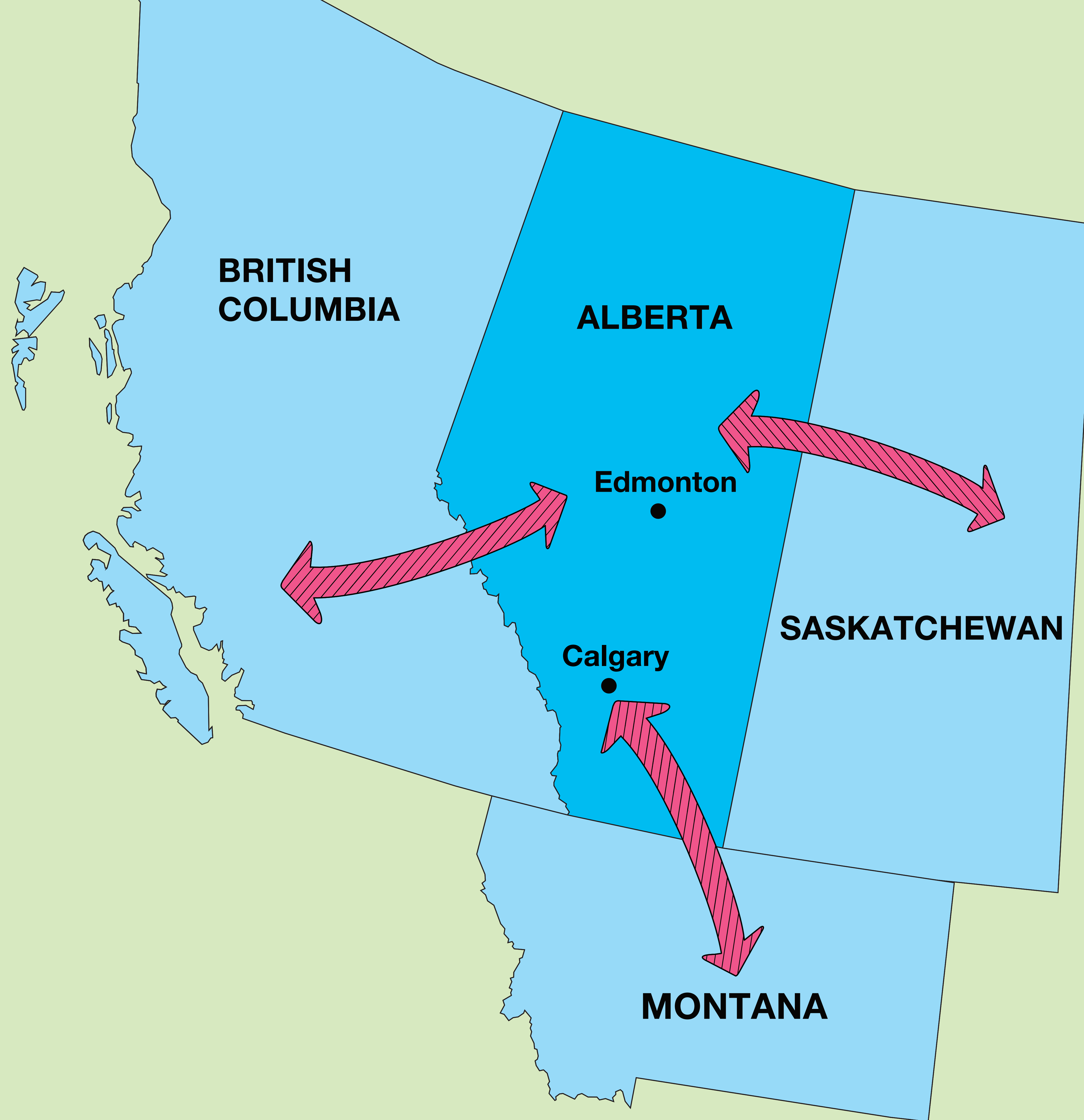


### Calgary Area



### Red Deer Area



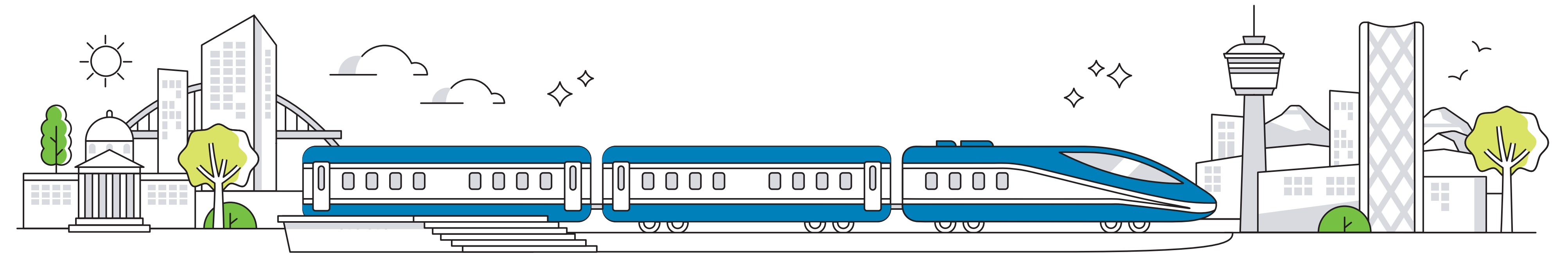


# Beyond Alberta

Connections to Saskatchewan, Montana, and British Columbia are considerations for the future.

Regional rail that connects to population centres and passenger rail services outside of the province would support increased ridership and services within Alberta.

# What Do You Think?



Rank these rail connections in the order you would like to see them delivered using the numbered stickers.

Edmonton / Calgary  
Commuter Rail from  
downtown to surrounding  
communities

Regional Rail to the  
Rocky Mountain Parks

Edmonton / Calgary  
Commuter Rail from  
downtown to the airports

Calgary-Red Deer-Edmonton  
Regional Rail

Rail from Calgary /  
Edmonton to other  
regional communities  
(e.g. Lethbridge, Grande  
Prairie, etc.)

# Curious About How We Forecast Ridership?

Expected ridership is an important decision-making driver for passenger rail. That is why to forecast the potential ridership of Alberta's 60-Year Possibilities, we are developing a province-wide model (analytical tool) that has two integrated components:

1. One component that forecasts travel across the province for **regional rail** and **commuter rail**
2. One component for potential high-speed **regional rail** in the **Edmonton-Red Deer-Calgary** corridor

This model will be used to predict how people's transportation habits may change when passenger rail becomes available. The forecasts are informed by:

- Population and employment forecasts for Alberta
- Travel survey data providing information on travel behaviour of residents and visitors
- Travel questionnaire of Alberta residents asking about mode shift preferences for new rail service that doesn't currently exist
- Historical data from other passenger rail operators in Canada and internationally

In 2024, over **20 million trips** were taken between Calgary and Edmonton. Preliminary forecasting indicated that this number could increase by more than three-fold over the next 60 years.

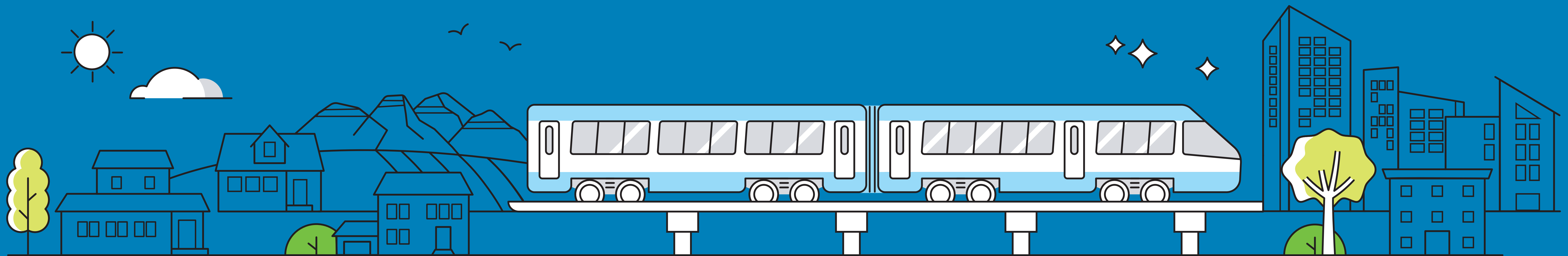


Alberta

# Station Five

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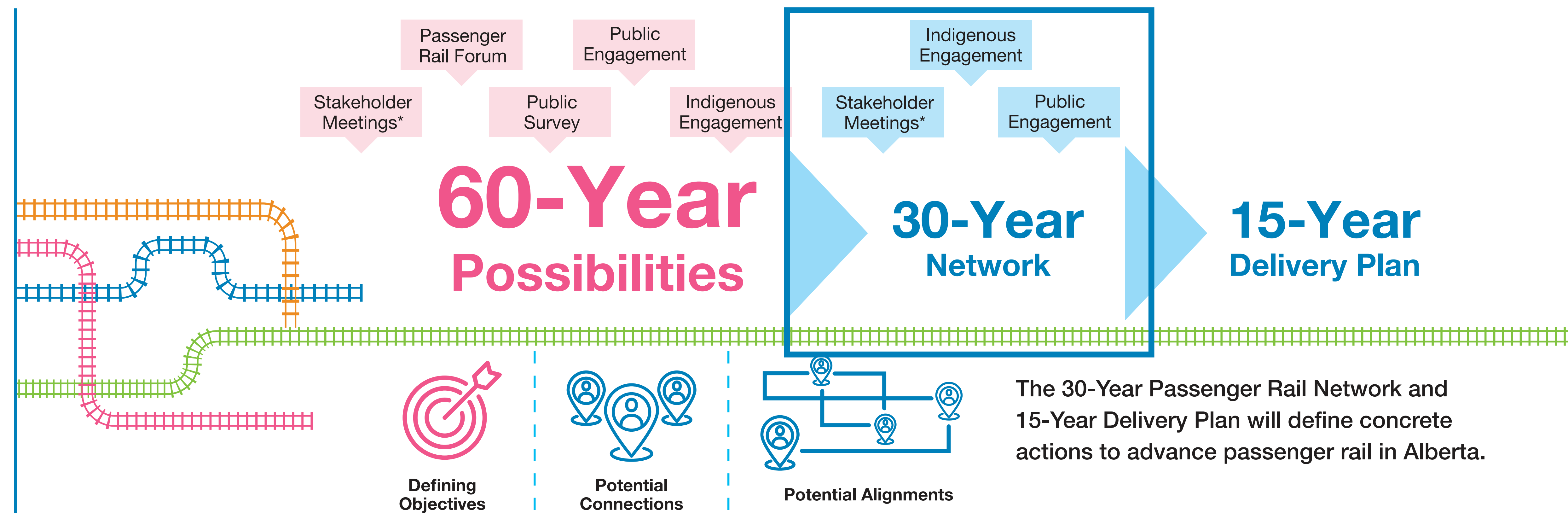
## Next Steps



# Developing the 30-Year Network

To create a realistic Master Plan, further evaluation of the **60-Year** Possibilities is required to determine the feasible network suited to Alberta in 30 years.

- The **60-Year** regional and commuter rail connections will be evaluated based on how well each addresses strategic, economic, financial, and operations & deliverability considerations.
- This evaluation will refine the feasibility assessments, including forecasting of ridership, revenues, and costs for various services.
- The resulting **30-Year Network** will identify passenger rail services that may be feasible within 30 years.



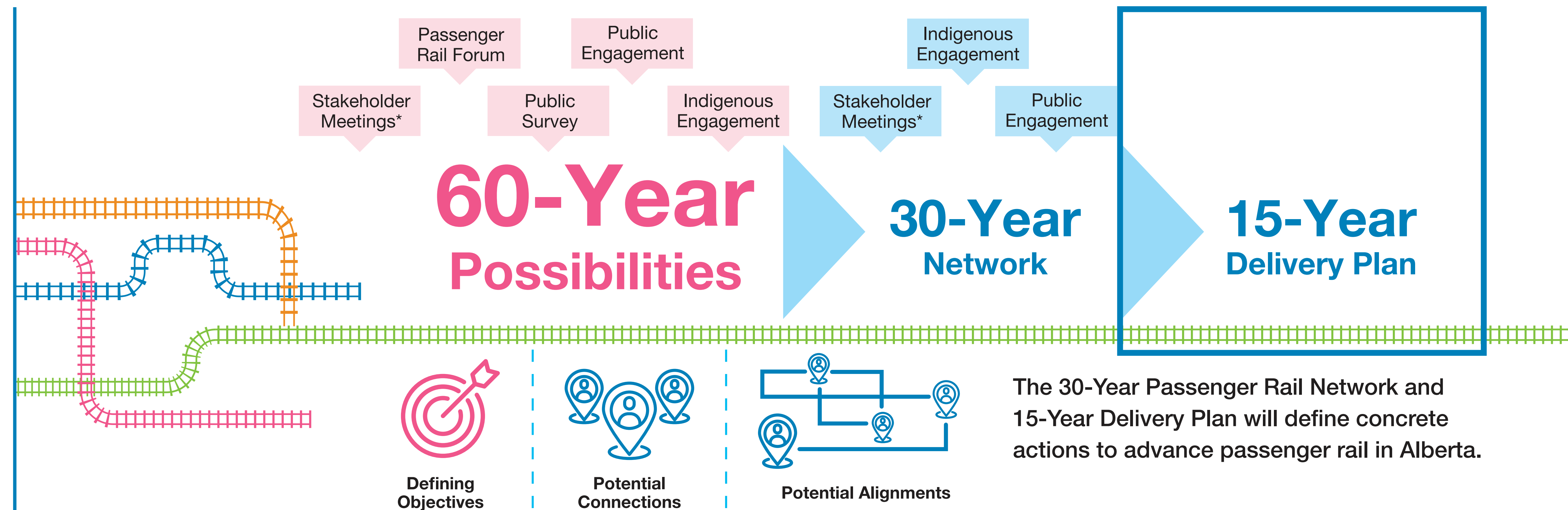
The **30-Year Network** will be further assessed through detailed cost-benefit analysis and financial assessment. It will be used to develop cost estimates and verify that the proposed passenger rail services can work together.

This work will determine a cost-to-benefit ratio for the proposed passenger rail network, which can help compare investments in passenger rail against “business-as-usual” alternatives, such as expanding highways.

# Drafting a 15-Year Delivery Plan

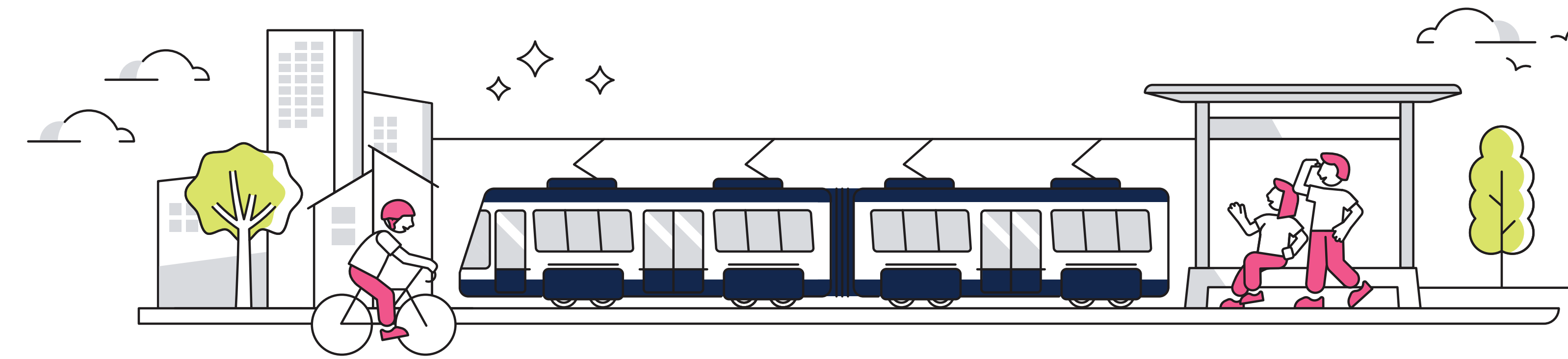
The **15-Year Delivery Plan** will describe the actions the Province could take over the next 15 years to begin implementing passenger rail services in the **30-Year Network**, including:

- The prioritization, staging, and sequencing of passenger rail investments.
- Considerations for effective governance of a passenger rail system, including options for a specialized provincial agency and its functions, powers, and accountabilities.
- Other actions required to advance the development of passenger rail.



Should the Province decide to implement any portion of the Master Plan, further work and engagement after the completion of the Master Plan will be required to evaluate the feasibility and impacts of connections identified in the **15-Year Delivery Plan** and develop detailed alignments. That future feasibility study would include more detailed rail engineering work and an assessment of environmental impacts.

# What Do You Think?



Building, operating, and maintaining passenger rail will require extensive expertise and resources: capacity can be built by upskilling Alberta’s labour force and by leveraging international expertise.

To do so, the Province may choose to partner with private companies to attract private investment and/or reduce financial risks to the government.

In Alberta, some services, including highway maintenance and registry services, are delivered with private companies.

In practice, passenger rail services in Canada and around the world are provided by a mix of public- and private-sector participants in various “hybrid” models.

The question on the right asks about your preferences for public and private involvement. Not all combinations of public and private involvement are feasible.



If the Government decides to partner with a private company, what responsibilities should belong to the Government and what responsibilities should belong to the private company?

Place a blue dot for Government and a red dot for private company.

Setting fares	Setting train schedules	Regulating safety	Selling tickets and providing customer service
Operating (driving) trains	Dispatching trains	Cleaning and maintaining stations	Maintaining track
Owning trains	Cleaning and maintaining the train vehicles	Owning stations	Owning track

# Thank You for Taking the Time to Join Us!

The Passenger Rail Master Plan will help to inform the Government on the next steps to realize Alberta's vision for a future that runs on rails.



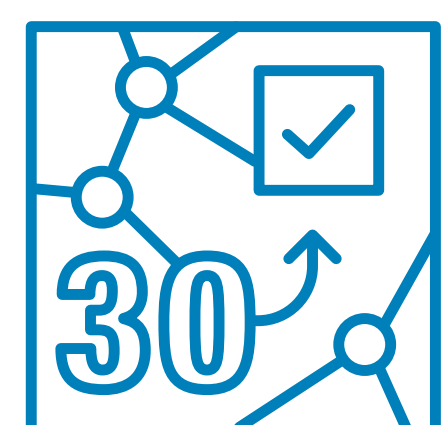
We are conducting **public open houses** until **March 18** in person and will host an **online session** on **April 3**.



The **public survey** remains open until **April 15**.

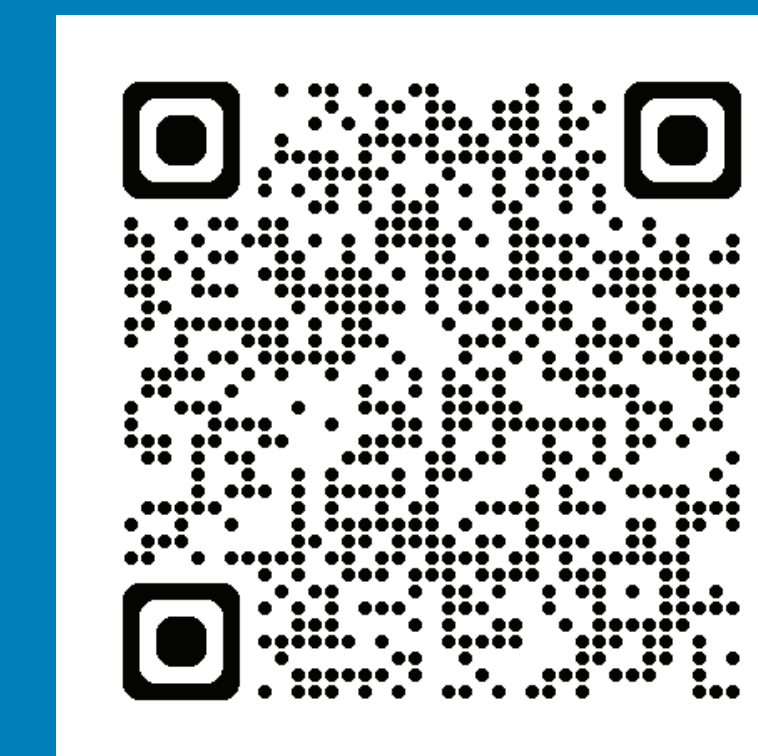


**Indigenous roundtables** are taking place in **March and April**.



We will be providing an update on the **30-Year Network** early summer **2025**.

## Stay in Touch!



Visit

[alberta.ca/passenger-rail-engagement](https://alberta.ca/passenger-rail-engagement)

Email

[PassengerRail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:PassengerRail@gov.ab.ca)

