



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

Advancing the Completion of the Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail

A shared investment in connection, nature, culture, and community



STRATHCONA
COUNTY



Sturgeon
COUNTY

Strategic Overview

Strategic Snapshot

- 100 km continuous regional river valley trail
- 75 km complete and in active public use
- 25 km remaining in southwest Edmonton
- 6 municipalities connected across the Edmonton Region
- \$24 million estimated cost to complete the final segment
- 2026–2030 coordinated delivery window

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A LEGACY, NEARLY COMPLETE

For more than two decades, the River Valley Alliance (RVA) has led a coordinated, region-wide effort to connect six municipalities through a continuous 100-kilometre, multi-use pedestrian trail within the Edmonton Region's North Saskatchewan River Valley. This vision was gifted a unifying name—Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw (Beaver Hill Road)—by Elder Jerry Saddleback, grounding the trail in Indigenous language, history, and responsibility to place.

Today, 75 percent of the Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail is complete, actively used and valued by residents and visitors.

What remains is not vision or ambition—it is the final connection.

This Strategic Plan sets out a clear, achievable pathway to advance the completion of the remaining 25 kilometres in southwest Edmonton and fully realize North America's longest urban river valley trail—a legacy asset already delivering measurable value and positioned to deliver substantially more.

**“WE ARE NO LONGER IMAGINING THE TRAIL.
WE ARE FINISHING IT.”**



WHY COMPLETION MATTERS

Economic Impact & Tourism Readiness

- Completion transforms the trail from partially connected segments into a destination-scale asset capable of supporting tourism, festivals, sporting events, and sustained regional economic activity.

Active Transportation & Climate Benefit

- As a continuous, low-carbon corridor, the trail supports daily movement, reduces vehicle reliance, and aligns with climate, health, and active-living priorities across all levels of government.

Public Health & Equity

- A fully connected trail expands equitable access to nature, physical activity, and mental-health benefits, including for underserved and rapidly growing communities in southwest Edmonton.

Environmental Stewardship

- Planned, managed access protects sensitive river valley ecosystems more effectively than fragmented or informal use, supporting long-term environmental resilience.

Reconciliation in Action

- The Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail embeds Indigenous language, history, and stewardship into a living landscape, supporting place-based learning and shared responsibility.



PROVEN DELIVERY AT REGIONAL SCALE

From 2012 to 2025, the River Valley Alliance and its municipal partners delivered 14 major capital projects, including three landmark pedestrian bridges, an outdoor elevator, boat docks and hand launches, and 75 kilometres of trail across six municipalities.

These projects demonstrate the ability to:

- Coordinate complex, multi-jurisdictional initiatives
- Manage public funds responsibly and transparently
- Deliver technically challenging infrastructure
- Balance access, environmental protection, and community values

This work has been supported not only by government partners, but also by hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contribute time, expertise, and local knowledge to advance the trail's success.

At a glance:

14 capital projects | 75 km of trail completed | Multi-level funding successfully leveraged

THE 2026–2030 STRATEGIC CONTEXT



The 2026–2030 period represents a critical alignment window for advancing the completion of the Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail

During this time:

- Municipal capital planning cycles converge
- Provincial and federal infrastructure funding remains available through matching programs
- Land access work can proceed alongside preliminary design and technical studies
- Early and sustained coordination reduces long-term cost escalation and delivery risk

This Strategic Plan deliberately sequences work to align with these realities, ensuring the project remains achievable, disciplined, and fiscally responsible.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2026-2030)

Advance Completion of the Final 25 Kilometres

- Deliver the last remaining segment required to fully connect the regional trail from end to end through six municipalities.

Secure Land Access Through Rights-of-Way

- Advance coordinated, respectful land access processes to enable construction readiness.

Advance Design and Construction Readiness

- Complete technical studies, consultation, design, and approvals to support efficient, timely delivery.

Sustain Public, Indigenous, and Multi-Government Alignment

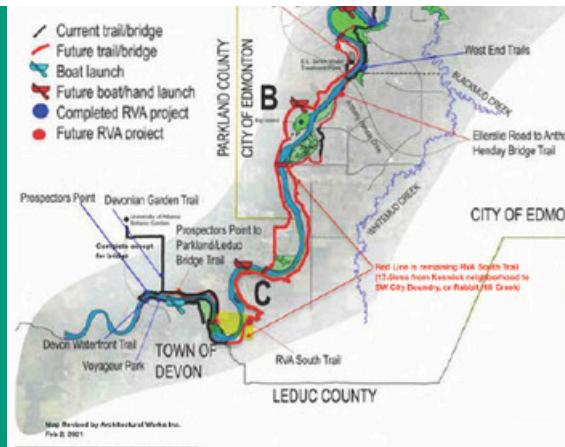
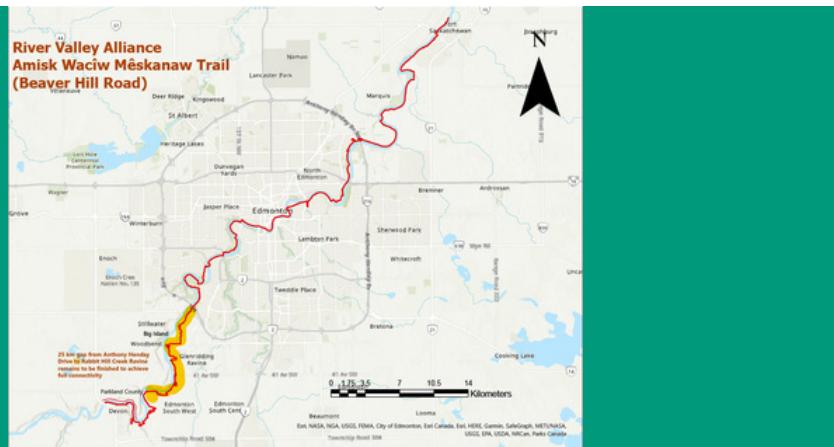
- Maintain strong relationships and shared commitment across communities, governments, and partners.

THE FINAL 25 KILOMETRES: SOUTHWEST EDMONTON

The remaining 25 kilometres of the Amisk Waciw Mêskanaw Trail are located entirely within southwest Edmonton, extending from Anthony Henday Drive to Rabbit Hill Creek Ravine.

Completion of this final segment, once achieved, will:

- Connect all six municipalities end-to-end
- Unlock the trail's full regional economic, social, and environmental value
- Enable consistent wayfinding, programming, and visitor experience across the entire corridor



A PHASED AND ACHIEVABLE DELIVERY APPROACH

Phase 1 (2026-2027): Funding Alignment & Land Access

Advance land access, preliminary studies, stakeholder coordination, and funding alignment.

Phase 2 (2027-2028): Readiness & Design

Complete detailed design, environmental work, public and Indigenous engagement, and construction readiness.

Phase 3 (2028-2030): Construction

Construct the remaining trail segments and supporting amenities to advance toward full regional connectivity.

While presented sequentially, phases will overlap to maintain momentum and respond to land access and funding readiness.

LAND ACCESS: ATTAINABLE & UNDERWAY

Securing land access through rights-of-way is a necessary and manageable component of completing the final 25 kilometres of trail.

This work is already underway through:

- Respectful engagement with landowners*
- Ongoing coordination with municipal partners*
- Alignment with long-range planning and environmental objectives*

With sustained focus and collaboration, significant progress on land access is expected by the end of 2027, enabling the project to advance confidently into full readiness and construction phases.

RVA'S ROLE IN DELIVERY

The River Valley Alliance does not replace municipal authority or ownership.

Its role is to:

- Coordinate across jurisdictions*
- Align partners, priorities, and funding*
- Reduce risk through early planning and collaboration*
- Sustain momentum through to project completion*

This coordinating role supports efficient delivery while respecting municipal leadership and decision-making.

RECONCILIATION & INDIGENOUS RELATIONSHIPS

The Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail reflects Indigenous history, language, and collaborative stewardship of the river valley.

Commitments include:

- Continued Elder guidance
- Indigenous-led interpretation and storytelling
- Respectful engagement throughout planning and delivery
- Ongoing leadership through the RVA's Indigenous Committee

This work reflects reconciliation as an ongoing practice—embedded in place, not symbolic in form.



TRAIL NAMING

AMISK WACÎW MÊSKANAW TRAIL (BEAVER HILL ROAD TRAIL) ᐊᒻ የ የ የ

At a public announcement ceremony held on May 11, 2023, the River Valley Alliance formally introduced the unifying name Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail (Beaver Hill Road Trail) following a two-year Indigenous engagement process guided by Indigenous knowledge holders from across the region. The name was gifted by Elder Jerry Saddleback, grounding the trail in nêhiyawêwin (the Cree language) and in long-standing relationships between people, land, and river.

“The nêhiyawak (Cree) were able to travel all of North and South America like it was our living room...Amisk is the beaver himself. Wacîw means a large hill. Mêskanaw translates to a sacred holy road or pathway. It is a kind and compassionate trail.”

— Elder Jerry Saddleback



INTERPRETATION & WAYFINDING IMPLEMENTATION

The trail naming initiative moved beyond symbolism to full implementation across the regional trail system.

As of 2025, the system includes:

- 8 interpretive trail name signs installed across the six municipalities
- 75 wayfinding symbols, created by Dene-Métis artist Matthew Weigel, supporting safe navigation and continuity
- QR-enabled interpretation linking users to place-based history and storytelling

Together, these elements ensure the trail is not only physically connected, but culturally grounded, clearly navigable, and meaningfully interpreted.



ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bringing the Trail to Life

The Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail is not only a physical connection—it is a living corridor shaped by how people experience, understand, and care for it.

Each year, coordinated trail-based community engagement activities are delivered across all six municipalities through the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) and the RVA Indigenous Committee.

Community Engagement Committee (CEC)

CEC-led activities include guided walking and cycling tours, birding and wildlife observation walks, mushroom identification and ecological learning walks, and guided historical and heritage walks.



ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

RVA Indigenous Committee

Through the RVA Indigenous Committee, Indigenous-led, Elder-guided trail experiences support knowledge sharing related to traditional plants and medicines, land-based learning, traditional games, art, crafts, music, and storytelling tied to specific places along the trail.

These activities support respectful use, environmental awareness, cultural understanding, and long-term stewardship of the river valley.

ACTIVATION & STEWARDSHIP OUTCOMES

Completion of the Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail enables consistent, coordinated stewardship across the entire corridor.

When people understand the trail—its history, its ecology, and its cultural significance—they use it differently. They respect sensitive areas, follow designated routes, and develop a shared sense of responsibility for its care.

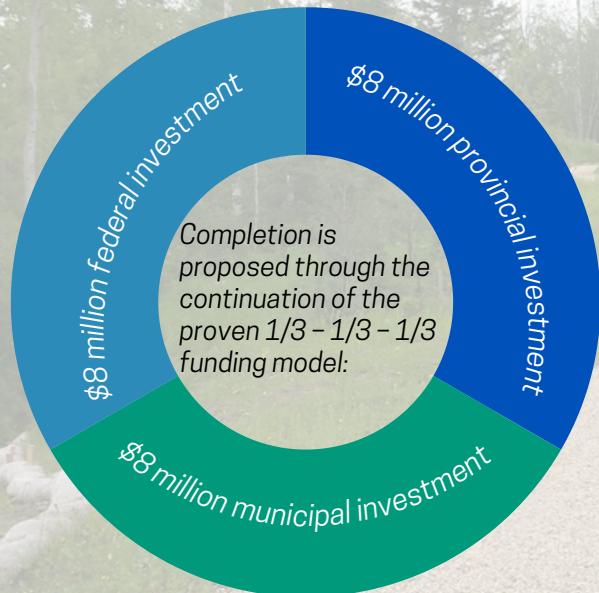
Through coordinated programming, interpretation, and engagement, increased use resulting from full connectivity strengthens—rather than degrades—the river valley over time, protecting public investment and supporting long-term environmental resilience.



INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

A Shared Investment Framework

The estimated cost to complete the final 25 kilometres of trail is \$24 million, based on multiple rounds of professional costing and ground-truthing.



In parallel, private and philanthropic contributions may be pursued to complement public investment and support enhanced amenities where appropriate.

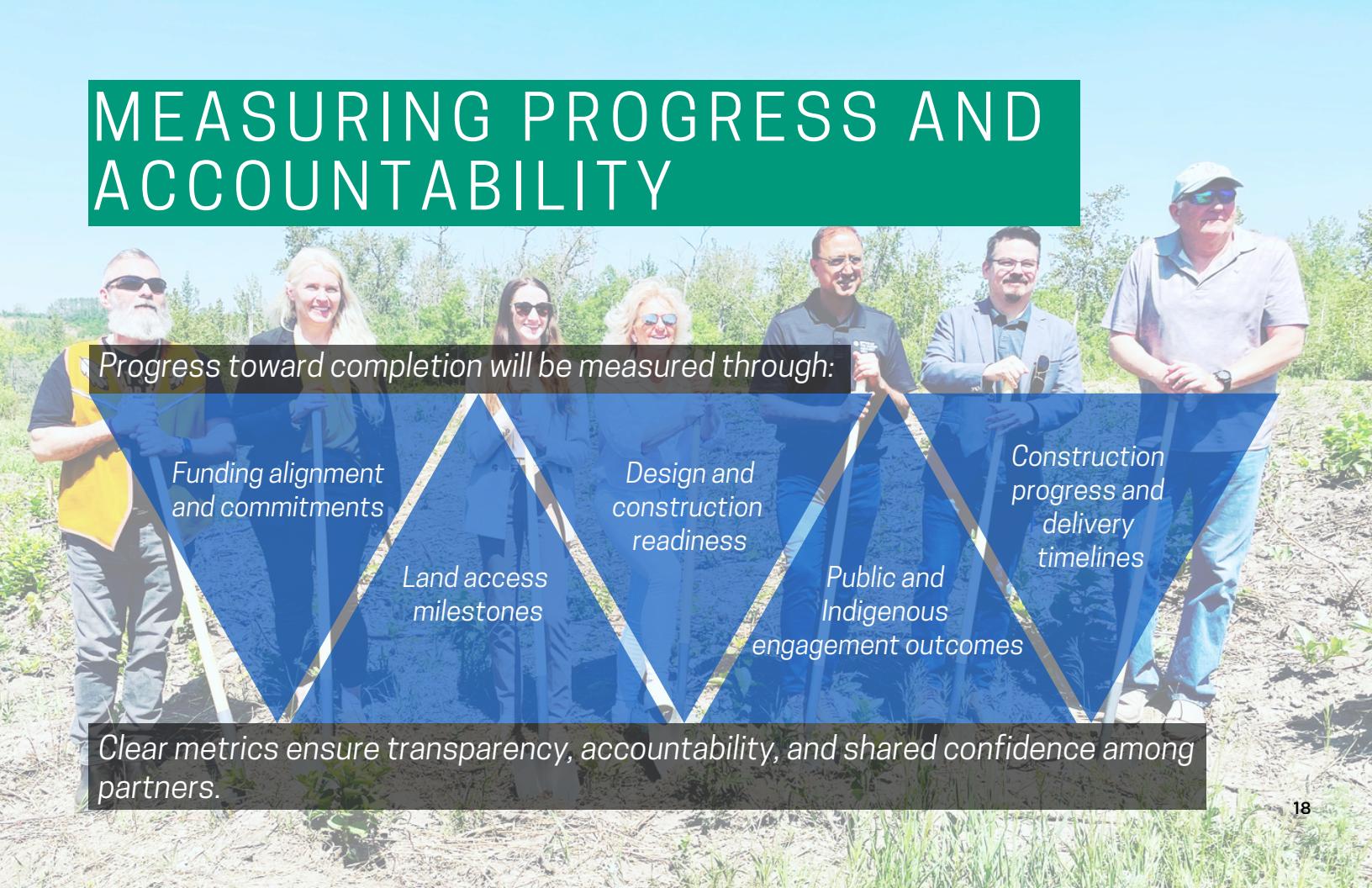
Private Investment Opportunity (Optional)

Private and philanthropic contributions are not required to deliver the core trail infrastructure.

Such investment offers an opportunity to complement public funding by enhancing trail amenities, interpretation, accessibility features, and stewardship initiatives. Donor support can help accelerate select elements, enrich the user experience, and ensure the Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail is not only completed, but completed exceptionally.

Private investment strengthens the trail's long-term value while preserving the integrity of the public funding model.

MEASURING PROGRESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY



Progress toward completion will be measured through:

Funding alignment and commitments

Land access milestones

Design and construction readiness

Public and Indigenous engagement outcomes

Construction progress and delivery timelines

Clear metrics ensure transparency, accountability, and shared confidence among partners.

THE 2030 OUTLOOK

A Completed Legacy

By 2030, the Amisk Waciw Mêskanaw Trail is positioned to achieve full regional connectivity, with the final connection well advanced.

Through coordinated land access, aligned funding commitments, and phased delivery, the River Valley Alliance and its municipal partners will have transformed decades of vision into tangible progress. The trail will function as a largely continuous, world-class river valley pedestrian corridor—strengthening active transportation, environmental stewardship, cultural connection, and regional tourism across the Edmonton Metropolitan Region.

Progress achieved between 2026 and 2030 is designed to sustain momentum, reduce delivery risk, and ensure the remaining connection moves decisively from planning toward completion.

CALL TO ACTION

Finish What We Started

The Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail is already delivering value—three-quarters complete and widely used across the region.

Completing the final 25 kilometres transforms a successful network into a fully realized legacy: a continuous, culturally grounded river valley trail connecting six municipalities.

The path forward is clear.

The model is proven.

What remains is a shared commitment to move the final connection from planning to delivery—
together



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