

For Information

DATE: May 29, 2012

REPORT TITLE: **GTA WEST CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY**

FROM: Dan Labrecque, Commissioner of Public Works

OBJECTIVE

To provide Council with background information relating to the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment Study; in advance of the MTO Delegation to Regional Council scheduled for June 28, 2012. The MTO's GTA West Study Team will present highlights of the additional analysis completed in the Halton Region Area.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- As part of the GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) released a Draft Transportation Development Strategy (TDS) Report in March, 2011. The Draft TDS identified the need for a new transportation corridor that would pass through the Town of Caledon and the City of Brampton (in the Region of Peel).
- The Region of Peel asked for clarification on several aspects of the TDS and the Preliminary Route Planning Study Area.
- In response to input received from the Town of Halton Hills on the Draft TDS, the MTO decided to carry out additional analysis and consultation to study additional alternatives in the Halton area.
- The GTA West study team presented their preliminary findings from the additional analysis to municipal stakeholders on April 4, 2012. The work presented was "preliminary" and was focused on the assessment of benefits and impacts with no conclusions.
- MTO expects to release the final TDS in fall, 2012. Staff will continue to monitor the work being conducted by MTO and will provide updates and seek Council direction as necessary. Finalization of the TDS will mark the end of Stage 1 of the EA study. At this time MTO has not identified funding for Stage 2 of the EA.

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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is undertaking an Environmental Assessment (EA) study to examine long-term transportation problems and opportunities, and to consider alternative solutions to provide better linkages between Urban Growth Centres in the study's Preliminary Study Area (Refer to Appendix I).

The EA study was launched in 2007. The Terms of Reference for the study were approved by the Ontario Minister of the Environment in March 2008. Stage 1 of the EA study has examined and confirmed the need for transportation improvements in the Preliminary Study Area, examined multi-modal alternative solutions, identified a Draft Transportation Development Strategy (TDS) and defined a Preliminary Route Planning Study Area.

In developing alternatives, the MTO followed a philosophy of first optimizing the existing transportation network and then if necessary incorporating non-roadway infrastructure improvements and expansions before considering the provision of new roads and/or highways.

Regional and area municipal staff have been actively involved in the EA study through participation in Municipal Advisory Group meetings, review of and comments on reports and supporting documents, and inter-agency discussions.

2. Findings

a. Draft Transportation Development Strategy (TDS)

Stage 1 of the EA study looked at four groups of transportation alternatives: (1) optimization of existing transportation infrastructure; (2) the development of new/expanded non-road infrastructure; (3) the widening/improvements of existing roadways; and (4) the construction of a new transportation corridor. Each group built on the others – Group 4, for example, included elements from Groups 1, 2 and 3. Assessment conducted during Stage 1 determined that a new transportation corridor is needed to fully address future transportation problems and opportunities. The Draft TDS developed by the MTO included elements from all four groups of alternatives.

The recommended TDS will be implemented in phases:

Short-Term Elements (0-5 Years)

- Stage 2 of the EA study (route planning and preliminary design of a new transportation corridor)
- Optimization of existing transportation facilities through, for example:
 - High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) / transit bypass at key locations
 - Expanded use of ramp metering
 - Expanded use of speed harmonization
 - Enhanced incident/congestion management

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- Provincial/employer led Transportation Demand Management programs
- Long combination vehicles
- Studies to explore inter-regional transit improvements
- A feasibility review of goods movement and freight initiatives

Medium-Term Elements (5-15 Years)

- Widening of selected highways to provide additional capacity, including potential HOV lanes – MTO to undertake EA studies to investigate and confirm the need, timing and the lane requirements for widening of the following provincial facilities:
 - Highway 401
 - Highway 407 ETR
 - Highway 410
 - Highway 427
 - Highway 400

Long-Term Elements (15-25 Years)

- Design and construction of a new transportation corridor that would connect Highway 400 to Highway 401, and would add a new north-south link to Highway 401/407 ETR.

b. Regional Comments on the Draft Transportation Development Strategy (TDS)

The Region of Peel submitted comments to the MTO on the Draft TDS in May, 2011. At the May 26, 2011 Regional Council meeting, Council passed two separate motions (Resolutions 2011-464 and 2011-465) requesting the MTO to move immediately to initiate Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor EA Study, and requesting that staff from MTO schedule a meeting with Regional staff to discuss the elimination of the roadway shown in the "Mayfield West cone" and incorporate it within the Dixie Road corridor. (Refer to Appendix II)

MTO arranged a meeting for March 26, 2012 to discuss the "Mayfield West cone". At this meeting, MTO's GTA West study team members provided an update on the Preliminary Route Planning Study to Region of Peel, Town of Caledon and City of Brampton representatives. The attendees discussed the expansion of the study area referred to as the "Mayfield West Cone" near Highway 410. MTO indicated that it would widen the "cone" and expand it southward, which will include lands in the City of Brampton. The additional study area will allow for alternatives given the constraints of already approved development on subject lands. Any development applications within the identified study areas will need to be circulated to MTO for comment, and may result in objections from the MTO to the proposed development, which could have the effect of "freezing" development for the period of the EA.

There have been a number of discussions between MTO and staff from the Town of Caledon, the City of Brampton and the Regional Municipality of Peel regarding the connection of the GTA West Corridor to Highway 410. The discussion will continue prior to MTO's finalization of Stage 1 of the TDS.

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GTA WEST CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY**c. Scope of Additional Work in the Halton Area**

The GTA West Corridor EA Draft Transportation Development Strategy (TDS) was released in March 2011. Comments were provided by all the affected municipalities in response to the Draft TDS. In response to comments from Halton Hills regarding the potential impacts on agricultural lands in that municipality, the GTA West study team announced that they would be undertaking additional analysis in Halton Hills to further examine the impacts on agricultural properties through the Halton Hills area (Refer to Appendix III).

At the same time, Halton Hills retained Hatch Mott McDonald Consultants to undertake a review of MTO's work program on the additional analysis, including investigating in greater detail the option of widening Hwy 401 alone (without extending the GTA West through Halton Region to tie in to Hwy 401 near Milton.)

The MTO - GTA West study team presented their preliminary findings from the additional analysis to municipal stakeholders on April 4, 2012. The work presented was "preliminary" and was focused on the assessment of benefits and impacts with no conclusions (Refer to Appendix IV).

The MTO is planning to conduct a Municipal/Agency Meeting on June 1, 2012 to review the results of the additional analysis and draft recommendations for the Halton Hills area. This analysis will examine the benefits and impacts of widening Highway 401 as an alternative to a new east-west corridor through Halton Region. Additionally, two Public Information Centres (PICs) are planned on June 12 and June 14, 2012, inviting the public to review the draft recommendations of the study.

3. Next Steps

Finalization of the TDS, based on the input and comments received from stakeholders and the public, will mark the end of Stage 1 of the EA study. MTO has advised that provincial funding for Stage 2 has not been identified.

Subject to funding for Stage 2, the MTO will need to select and engage a consultant team. MTO indicated that this is expected to take place during the fall 2012. Stage 2 of the EA study is expected to take approximately 5 years. The results of the EA would then need to be approved by the Minister of the Environment (a process expected to take 1 to 1 ½ years). This would be followed by a detailed design study (lasting approximately 5 years).

There have been a number of discussions between MTO and staff from the Town of Caledon, the City of Brampton and the Regional Municipality of Peel regarding the connection of the GTA West Corridor to Highway 410. The discussion is expected to continue prior to MTO's finalization of the GTA West Corridor TDS.

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Regional staff will continue to monitor the work being conducted by both MTO and Hatch Mott McDonald for the Town of Halton Hills and will provide updates and seek Council direction as necessary.

Regional staff will stay actively involved in, and continue to work in collaboration with the area municipalities on this important project as it advances beyond Stage 1. Staff will provide updates to Regional Council on the EA study as it progresses.




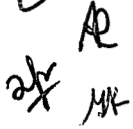
Dan Labrecque
Commissioner of Public Works

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

 For further information regarding this report, please contact Gary Kocialek at extension 4100 or via email at gary.kocialek@peelregion.ca

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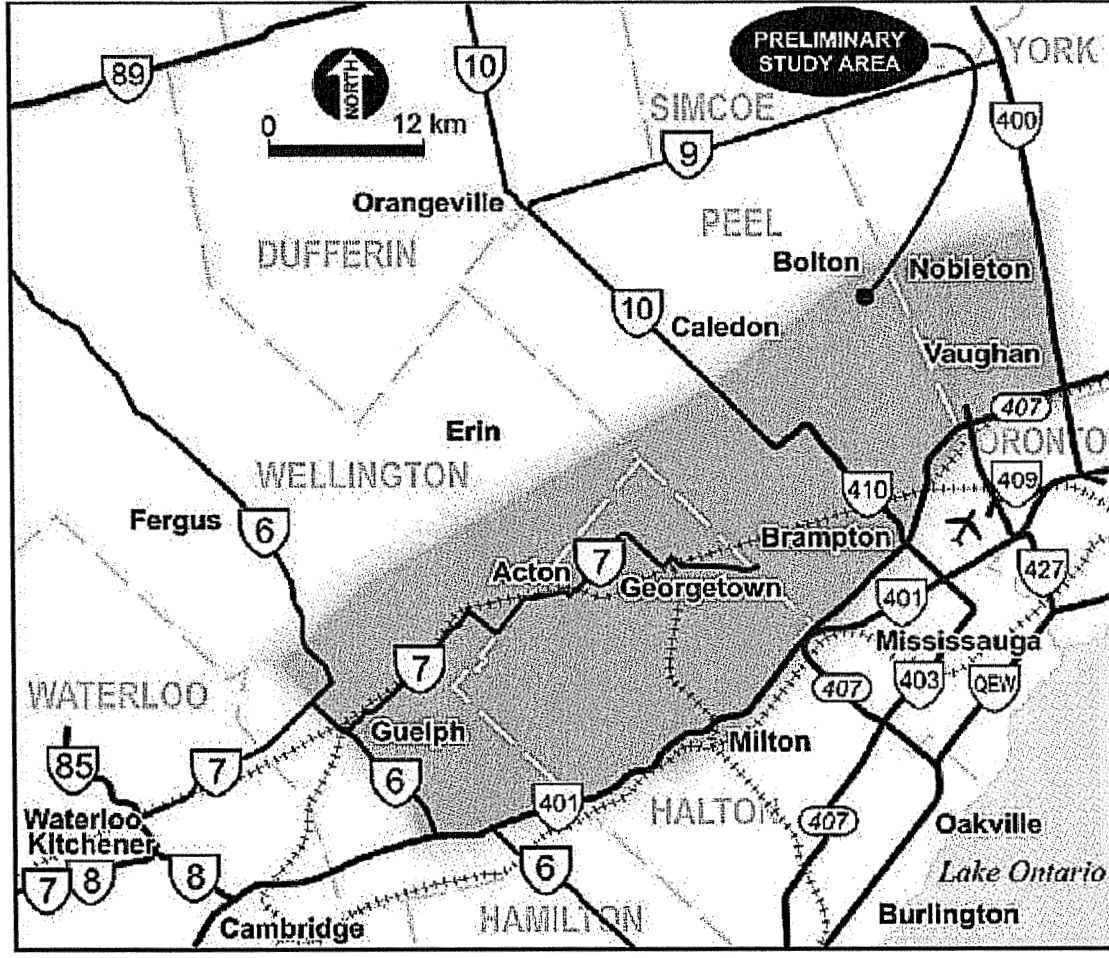
c. Legislative Services

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APPENDIX I

GTA West - Preliminary Study Area



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APPENDIX II

Excerpts from the May 26, 2011 Regional Council Minutes:

- "c) **Jin Wang, Project Coordinator, Ministry of Transportation, Ontario (MTO) and Neil Ahmed, Consultant Project Manager, McCormick Rankin Corporation** Providing an Update regarding the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment

Received

2011-463

See also Resolutions 2011-464 and 2011-465

A copy of the presentation is available from the Office of the Regional Clerk.

Moved by Councillor Moore,
Seconded by Councillor Morrison;

Whereas, the Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS) identified the need for a North-South link;

And whereas, the first stage of the GTA West Environmental Assessment (EA) study recommends a combination of options 4-2 and 4-3 consistent with the HPBATS study corridor in northern Peel and Halton Regions;

And whereas, the provincial highway planning and design process can be lengthy;

And whereas, the Region of Peel, through Regional Official Plan Amendment Number 16 (ROPA 16), has designated a conceptual north-south corridor study area to be protected until an alignment is defined;

And whereas, it is unfair to landowners within the study area that may not end up as part of the corridor, to keep large amounts of land sterilized for a long period of time;

Therefore be it resolved, that the Region of Peel requests the Province of Ontario to move immediately to initiate Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) Study to identify a specific highway corridor as soon as possible;

And further, that Halton and York Regions, also affected by this provincial Environmental Assessment (EA), be asked to endorse this recommendation.

Carried

2011-464

See also Resolutions 2011-463 and 2011-465

Jin Wang, Project Coordinator, Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), provided an overview of the two-stage Environmental Assessment process which includes the identification of need and multi-modal alternatives in the first phase and the identification of a route location for the new corridor in the second stage.

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He advised that MTO is planning for additional transportation improvements that will be required to support future growth, through the development of a Transportation Development Strategy. Key elements of the strategy include optimizing the use of existing transportation infrastructure; supporting implementation of the transit initiatives in Metrolinx RTP and GO 2020; initiating a study to investigate inter-regional transit opportunities linking western urban centres; widening selected highways to provide additional capacity, including potential High Occupancy Vehicle lanes and; protecting and implementing a new transportation corridor from Highway 400 westerly to Highway 401, east of the Niagara Escarpment.

In response to a question from Councillor Whitehead, Jin Wang advised that the process to develop and build the corridor could take a minimum of 15 to 20 years.

Councillor Whitehead stressed the need for provincial support in identifying the location of the corridor and releasing lands that will not be required to enable the municipality to continue its planning processes.

Councillor McCallion congratulated the MTO for undertaking long range planning, but stated there is urgent need to address traffic congestion and the impact it will have on the economic future in the GTA.

Councillor Paterak requested that staff from MTO schedule a meeting with Regional staff to discuss the elimination of the roadway shown in the "Mayfield West cone" and incorporate it within the Dixie Road corridor.

Councillor Paterak further requested that staff from MTO present to a future meeting of Regional Council regarding the future plans for Highway 24.

Items Related to Public Works – Item PW-B1 was dealt with.

PW-B. TRANSPORTATION

PW-B1. GTA West Corridor Draft Transportation Development Strategy

Moved by Councillor Thompson,
Seconded by Councillor Starr;

That the Region of Peel comments on the GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study's Draft Transportation Development Strategy Report, attached as Appendix IV to the report of the Commissioner of Public Works, dated May 9, 2011, titled "GTA West Corridor Draft Transportation Development Strategy", be endorsed;

And further, that a copy of the subject report be submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study Project Team, to serve as the Region of Peel's comments and input on the Draft Transportation Development Strategy Report;

And further, that the Regional Chair be authorized to meet with the Minister of Transportation Ontario, on behalf of Regional Council:

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- to discuss the Region's interest in working with the Province to further our common objectives for the GTA West Corridor; and
- to request approval to undertake and identify funding for Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study so that this stage can be expedited;

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And further, that a copy of the subject report be forwarded to the Cities of Brampton, Mississauga, Guelph and Vaughan, the Towns of Caledon and Halton Hills, the Regions of Halton and York and the County of Wellington, for information.

Carried

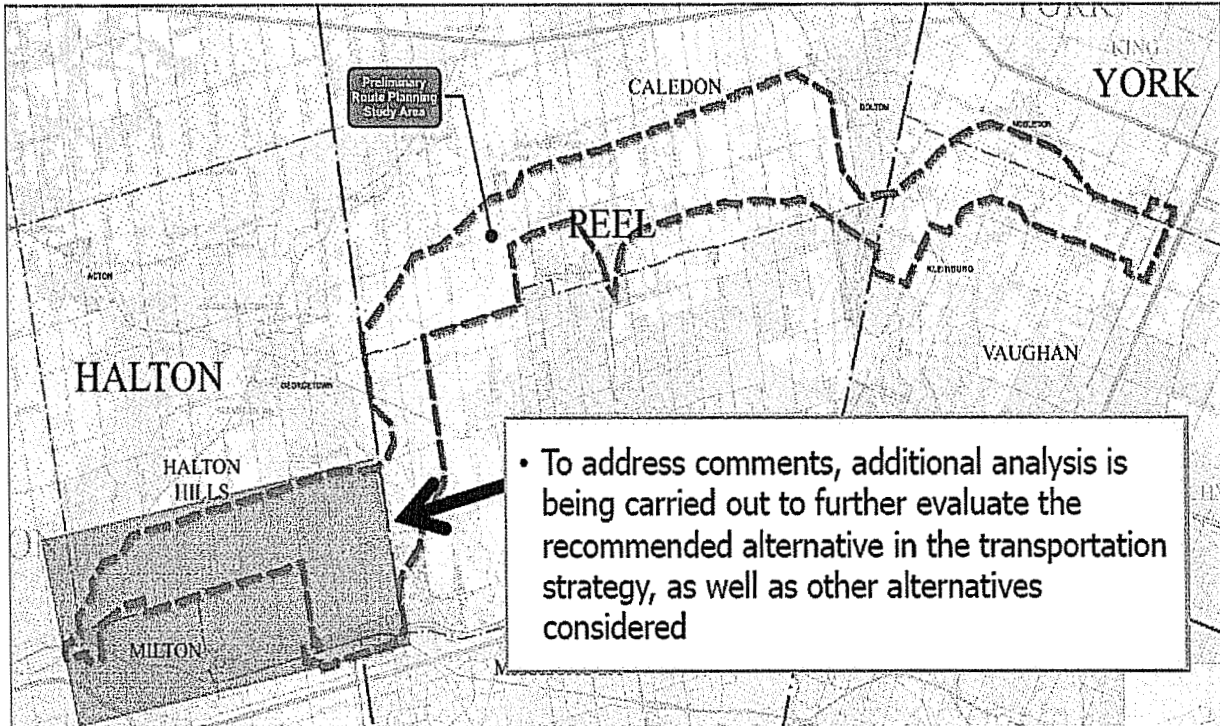
2011-465

See also Resolutions 2011-463 and 2011-464"

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APPENDIX III

GTA West - Focused Area for Additional Analysis (Halton Region)



APPENDIX IV

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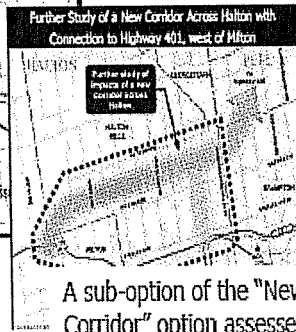
GTA West – Alternatives Being Considered
(Focused Assessment on New Corridor and “Hwy 401” Widening).

“New Corridor” includes:

- East-west corridor through Halton Region
- North-south link to Hwy 401/407 ETR (provincial link)

“Hwy 401 Widening” includes:

- New corridor connection to Highway 401/407 ETR
- Widening of Highway 401 through Milton urban area



A sub-option of the “New Corridor” option assessed the potential impact of the north-south link as a municipal facility

