

**CITY OF VAUGHAN**

**EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2015**

Item 38, Report No. 17, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on April 21, 2015.

**38                    GTA WEST CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTE PLANNING AND  
                         ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY, STAGE 2  
                         MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (ONTARIO)  
                         THE KLEINBURG AND AREA RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION COMMENTS  
                         WARD 1**

**The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Public Works, Commissioner of Planning, Director of Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning Services and Acting Director of Policy Planning, dated April 14, 2015:**

**Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Public Works, Commissioner of Planning, Director of Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning Services and Acting Director of Policy Planning, recommend:

1. That the correspondence from the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association (KARA) with respect to the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning Environmental Assessment Study, dated March 2, 2015 (included as Attachment No. 1) together with this report be forwarded to the Ministry of Transportation and the GTA West Project Team for consideration in the Environmental Assessment study.

**Contribution to Sustainability**

The proposed GTA West Corridor is expected to contribute to economic and social sustainability by addressing long-term inter-regional transportation deficiencies and opportunities. The proposed solutions would develop an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that enables the efficient movement of people and goods, and provides better transportation linkages between Urban Growth Centres in the GTA West Route Planning Study Area. However, the GTA West Corridor is expected to cross the most intact and sensitive area of the Greenbelt in Vaughan. To be fully sustainable, the environmental issues must be fully explored and addressed through Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study (GTA West EA).

**Economic Impact**

There are no immediate economic impacts associated with this report.

**Communications Plan**

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and the GTA West Project Team will be notified of any resolutions which are passed by Council relating to this report.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to respond to a direction from Council with respect to the recommendations submitted by the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association, concerning the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, Stage 2.

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#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

Council, at its meeting of March 24, 2015, adopted the following recommendations:

*“That the following recommendations submitted by the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers’ Association, be referred to staff for consideration and review, and a report be provided to the Committee of the Whole meeting of April 14, 2015:*

- 1. That Council send correspondence to MTO and the GTA West Project Team stating its preference for the most northerly route as the one having the least impact on the Kleinburg Community;*
- 2. That the full impact of a full interchange at Weston Road as an alternative to a Pine Valley Drive interchange be considered within the current EA;*
- 3. That the Greenbelt lands abutting the new route remain under the Greenbelt designation; and*
- 4. That where appropriate, with public safety being paramount, that MTO and the GTA West Project Team look at ways and means of incorporating opportunities for pedestrian and cycling trails.”*

**It is premature for the City to identify a preference for a particular Corridor alternative at this time in the EA process**

With respect to the first recommendation in KARA’s submission, it is premature for the City to identify a preference for a particular GTA West corridor alternative at this time until all social, environmental and economic impacts are fully considered and their effects are planned and addressed through the Individual EA process by the GTA West team. The other points raised in KARA’s letter are addressed below.

**The Environmental Assessment Process provides opportunity for meaningful public and stakeholder consultation and input**

The GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study is being undertaken following the planning process for an Individual Environmental Assessment (Individual EA) in accordance with the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. Individual EAs are typically carried out for large-scale, multifaceted projects with the potential for significant environmental effects and major public interest.

By assessing the potential effects of certain activities on the environment, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is a decision-making process used to promote good environmental planning. In Ontario, this process is defined and finds its authority in the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA), RSO 1990. The purpose of the OEAA is to provide for the protection, conservation, and wise management of Ontario's environment. To achieve this, the OEAA ensures that environmental problems or opportunities are considered and their effects are planned for, before development or building takes place. Public input throughout the EA is an essential part of the process.

**Through Stage 2 of the GTA West EA, MTO will be refining the long list of alternatives with consideration for the policies of the Provincial *Growth Plan***

As MTO progresses through Stage 2 of the GTA West Individual Environmental Assessment, the long list of alternatives will be refined and the identification of the short list of route alternatives

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with be identified with consideration for the input from Public Information Centre #1. In addition, MTO will further develop, assess and evaluate the short list of route alternatives within the Focused Analysis Area based on the *Growth Plan* policies. The *Growth Plan* outlines a set of policies for managing growth and development, guiding planning decisions, and presenting a planning “vision” for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area.

The GTA West Corridor is identified in the *Growth Plan* as part of the required transportation improvements to support the vision. The *Growth Plan* builds on other key government initiatives including the *Greenbelt Plan* (established through the *Greenbelt Act 2005*) and the *Provincial Policy Statement (2005)*. The *Growth Plan* is accompanied by the *Places to Grow Act (2005)*, which requires all planning decisions made by the Province, municipalities and other authorities to conform to the policies contained in the *Growth Plan*. Jointly, the *Greenbelt Plan* and *Growth Plan* provide clarity and certainty about urban structure, where and how future growth should be accommodated, and what must be protected for current and future generations in the GGH area.

#### **Council has requested MTO to consider the implications of the GTA West on Land Use and the Environment**

The northwest quadrant of the City, west of Highway 400, is characterized by a complex combination of environmental conditions, land use regulations, topography, existing and planned development and existing and planned infrastructure, which make long-term community planning challenging. In consideration of this, Council, at its meeting on March 24, 2015, adopted the following recommendations:

*“That in the Ministry’s consideration of the selection of the preferred route and ultimate alignment, the following land use planning objectives be prioritized:*

- a) *Avoiding wherever possible development areas within the existing Settlement Area, in particular the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan Huntington Community;*
- b) *Minimizing the effect of the fragmentation or landlocking of potentially developable areas caused by the route and/or the route’s interaction with existing infrastructure;*
- c) *Minimizing the impacts on the Provincial Growth Plan’s “Whitebelt Area”, by locating the route such, that in the long-term, it will not create large areas of Whitebelt land, north of the route, that are not contiguous with the community to the south.*

*That the Ministry be requested to, in the selection of the preferred route, minimize the overall impacts on the environmentally sensitive areas within the study area, including the Greenbelt Plan Area, the Core Features of the Natural Heritage Network and the Headwater Drainage Area of the Humber River.’*

This resolution speaks to minimizing the impact on the Kleinburg-Nashville Community and the “Greenbelt” lands.

#### **On March 31, 2015 a meeting was held between the City, York Region, Township of King and MTO staff to discuss interchanges and crossing roads opportunities for the GTA West Corridor**

On March 31, 2015, a meeting was held between the City, York Region, Township of King and MTO staff to discuss interchanges and crossing roads opportunities for the GTA West Corridor. At the meeting, refinements to route alternatives and location of proposed interchange locations were discussed including the provisions for at least one full interchange with Highway 400 to service the 400 North Employment Area Secondary Plan (OPA 637) area together with a

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Regional arterial connection with the ongoing Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study as per Council resolution of June 28, 2011.

It was recognized that while originally screened out from further consideration, the potential for an interchange with Weston Road should not be prematurely dismissed in absence of fully exploring the impacts in realizing and servicing the 400 North Employment Secondary Plan Area. The GTA West team concurred with City's comments and will be evaluating the potential for a partial interchange with Weston Road.

**#CycleON: Ontario's Cycling Strategy outlines what needs to be done in the next 20-years to promote cycling across the province as a viable mode of transportation**

In 2013, the Province of Ontario released #CycleON, Ontario's Cycling Strategy. The Strategy looks ahead 20 years and is designed to encourage the growth of cycling and improve the safety of people who cycle across the province. A bold Vision, ambitious Goals and five strategic directions were developed to guide the development of policies, programs and legislation over the next 20 years. As part of the #CycleON Strategy, the Action Plan 1.0 lays out the path the province will follow to work towards the vision and goals set out in the Strategy.

In addition, the Province also updated Bikeways Design Manual in March 2014. The guidelines in this manual have been developed to inform and provide guidance to designers regarding the design of cycling facilities within or crossing provincial highway right-of-ways.

The Ontario Highway Traffic Act (HTA) defines the rules of the road and identifies the responsibilities and rights of motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Currently the HTA defines a bicycle as a vehicle. As such, cyclists are required to comply with the rules of the road in the same manner as motorist. As per the current HTA legislation specific to bicycles and cycling, bicycles can be operated on most roadways in Ontario, with the exception of designated 400 series highways. It is important to note that roads are public spaces with multiple users – pedestrians, cyclists, transit passengers and motorists. Some roads may focus on pedestrians and cyclists, others such as freeways, focus on motorists. Generally, roads must safely accommodate all users under traffic laws.

Staff supports exploring the opportunities to incorporate cycling facilities as part of the GTA West undertaking, in context with #CycleON, Ontario's Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 1.0.

**Public and stakeholder group consultation will continue to be a key component of the EA study**

The GTA West Project Team, through use of innovative strategies and methods to maximize the outreach and engagement of study stakeholders, formed several advisory groups to support the Study. Many of these groups were involved during Stage 1 of the study and will continue to be involved during Stage 2.

One such group, the Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group (GTAG) includes representation from environmental interest groups, environmental ministries, and other Greenbelt experts.

The Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG) includes potentially affected provincial ministries, agencies and federal departments. The RAAG is a forum for the discussion of local planning and technical issues. The RAAG meetings were jointly held with a Municipal Advisory Group (MAG) on June 16, 2014 and November 7, 2014.

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Meaningful public and stakeholder consultation are important in shaping the outcome of this study. As part of the consultation program, Community Workshops were held in July and August 2014 where stakeholders were introduced to the study. The Project Team sought feedback on key features within the study area and where the transportation corridor should be located. Membership opportunities for the Community Advisory Group as well as the GTAG were advertised.

The second round of Community Workshops will be held in Spring 2015 followed by Advisory Group Meetings in Fall/Winter 2015. The preferred route will be presented at PIC #2 in Fall/Winter 2015.

#### **Regional Implications**

The Project Team presented the Stage 2 progress update of the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study to the Regional Committee of the Whole on March 5, 2015. At this meeting a letter dated January 19, 2015 from Ken Schwenger, President, Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association was received for information purposes. The letter was also addressed to Hon. Steven Del Duca, MPP Vaughan, Ontario Minister of Transportation, GTA West Project Team and City of Vaughan Council.

#### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan**

In consideration of the strategic priorities related to Vaughan Vision 2020, the recommendations of this report will assist in:

- The pursuit of excellence in service delivery;
- Planning and managing growth and economic vitality; and,
- The demonstration of leadership and promotion of effective governance.

This report is consistent with the priorities approved by Vaughan Council.

#### **Conclusion**

The City has provided input to MTO and the GTA West Team on matters related to the Natural Heritage Network, potential impacts on the City's urban structure, and the importance to integrate the provisions for at least one full interchange with Highway 400 to service the 400 North Employment Area Secondary Plan (OPA 637) area. Accordingly, it is recommended that the correspondence from the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association (KARA) with respect to the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning Environmental Assessment Study, dated March 2, 2015 (Communication C4) together with this report be forwarded to the Ministry of Transportation and the GTA West Project Team for consideration in the Environmental Assessment study.

Staff will continue to participate as a member of the Municipal Advisory Group throughout the study and will provide updates to Council at key milestones in the process.

#### **Attachments**

1. Communication C4, Priorities and Key Initiatives Committee, March 10, 2015, Item 1

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)