

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 19, 2016

Item 23, Report No. 18, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on April 19, 2016, as follows:

By receiving Communication C6 from Ms. Susan Walmer, Executive Director, Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Bathurst Street, Newmarket, dated April 18, 2016.

**23 GTA WEST CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTE PLANNING AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY, STAGE 2
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (ONTARIO)
SUSPENSION OF STUDY
WARD 1**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager of Planning and Growth Management, Director of Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning and Director of Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, dated April 5, 2016, be approved; and**
- 2) That Communication C4 from Ms. Paula Tenuta, BILD, dated April 4, 2016, be received.**

Recommendation

The Deputy City Manager of Planning and Growth Management, Director of Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning and Director of Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability recommend:

1. That Council request that the Ministry of Transportation resume the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, Stage 2 and expeditiously identify the preferred alignment and interchange locations taking into account the City of Vaughan Council resolution of March 24, 2015 and Vaughan Council's objective of completing the Municipal Comprehensive Review in early 2018; and
2. That a copy of this report be forwarded to the Province, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Members of Provincial Parliament with York Region, the City of Brampton, the Town of Caledon, the Township of King, the Region of Peel and the Region of York.

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.

The GTA West Corridor, however, 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.

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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 provide Council with an update on the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, Stage 2 and to recommend that the Ministry of Transportation be requested to resume the Study taking into account City of Vaughan concerns including minimizing negative impacts on the Natural Heritage Network so the preferred alignment of the GTA West Corridor can be defined without further delay.

Background - Analysis and Options

The GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study was initiated as part of the Provincial Growth Plan to explore all modes of transportation options to provide for the planned growth and to facilitate a more efficient movement of people and goods across the northern limits of the GTA. The GTA West EA also considers other transportation plans such as Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Region of York Viva, GO 2020 and Brampton Züm.

Stage 1 of the GTA West was initiated in 2007

In 2007, MTO initiated Stage 1 of the GTA West EA. The Terms of Reference for the Individual Environmental Assessment were approved by the Minister of Environment (MOE) on March 4, 2008.

Transportation Development Strategy, the outcome of Stage 1 of the GTA West EA was completed in November 2012

The GTA West EA consists of two stages. Stage 1 considered all transportation modes and their ability to address the future transportation demands by 2031. The outcome of Stage 1 was a multi-modal Transportation Development Strategy (TDS). The TDS was completed in November 2012. This stage made recommendations for optimizing the existing transportation network, improvements to non-roadway transportation modes such as transit and rail, widening of existing highways, and a new transportation corridor.

Stage 2 of the GTA West EA was initiated in early 2014

The MTO initiated Stage 2 of the GTA West EA in early 2014. Building on recommendations from Stage 1, as part of Stage 2, route alternatives for a new transportation corridor will be generated within the Route Planning Study Area. The new transportation corridor will include a 400-series highway, transitway, and a potential goods movement priority feature. A preferred route and interchange locations will be selected and developed as part of Stage 2.

Generally, the purpose of the GTA West EA is to address long-term inter-regional transportation infrastructure needs. The Study also considers alternative solutions as part of developing an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that will enable the efficient movement of people and goods, and provide better economic and transportation linkages between Urban Growth Centres. The GTA West transportation corridor is vital to provide the transportation infrastructure to meet the projected growth in both population and employment identified in the *Growth Plan* for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area including the City of Vaughan.

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A short list of alternatives and potential interchanges of the proposed GTA West Corridor were presented at the first round of PICs held in late 2014

The first round of Public Information Centres (PIC) in connection with Stage 2 was held in late 2014. The project team presented the study background and process, existing conditions within the study area, sought feedback on the long and short list of route alternatives, potential interchange locations, crossing road treatments and goods movement priority features. The Focused Analysis Area (FAA) surrounding the short list of alternatives was presented as zone surrounding the short list of route alternatives. The alternatives are illustrated in Attachment No. 1.

Within the City of Vaughan, the short list of route alternatives and potential interchanges of the proposed GTA West Corridor presented at the first round of PICs include:

- Three route alternatives for the GTA West between Regional Road 50 and Highway 400
- Two route alternatives for the northerly extension of Highway 427 to the GTA West together with the associated freeway to freeway interchange locations
- Two freeway to freeway interchange locations at Highway 400
- Potential interchanges at Regional Road 50, Regional Road 27 and Pine Valley Drive

Stage 2 Planning Process has two parallel, connected streams:

- The Route Planning Alternatives Stream determines the preferred route for the new highway and transitway
- The Crossing Road Alternatives Stream determines which crossing roads will have interchanges, bridges, or closures, and the design of those elements

The two streams will be combined to create a complete transportation corridor.

GTA West project team presented the short list of route alternatives and potential interchanges to the Priority and Key Initiatives Committee in March 2015

GTA West project team provided an update on the project status and advised the preliminary design of the preferred route would be presented in Winter/Spring 2015 and the Study completion was on schedule for completion in 2018.

Council, at its meeting of March 24, 2015, adopted the following recommendations in response to GTA West project team presentation:

“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.”*

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A short-list of corridor alignments and interchange locations including the Focused Area Study of the proposed GTA West Corridor were presented to municipal stakeholders in mid-2015

The GTA West project team continued to seek municipal and stakeholder feedback on key features within the study area and where the transportation corridor should be located. The third Municipal Advisory Group (MAG) and Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG) meeting was held in May 2015 where update was presented by the GTA West project team on the work completed since PIC #1. The presentation included refinements to route alternatives including a short list of corridor alignments and interchange locations, and the Focused Analysis Area. The project team sought input on the evaluation approach for the route alternatives including the key issues and trade-offs the project team has identified in the west, central and east sections of the GTA West study area.

Subsequently, focused working group meetings were held with local municipalities to discuss interchange and crossing road locations including freeway to freeway interchanges at Highway 427 and Highway 400.

The GTA West project team met again in October 2015 with the municipal representatives regarding previously identified interchange opportunities in the GTA West study area. The preliminary design of the preferred route was to be presented to public and stakeholders at the second round of PIC's planned for late 2015.

On December 16, 2015, the Minister of Transportation announced suspension on the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study

On December 16, 2015, the Minister of Transportation issued a media bulletin announcing suspension of the GTA West EA pending the project review to be concluded with an update to be provided in spring 2016. The Minister's bulletin is provided in Attachment No.1.

The GTA West Corridor would provide the much needed east-west transportation connectivity across the City and link the planned employment areas

The GTA West Corridor has been considered in both the Region and City's Transportation Master Plans. The GTA West Corridor is an important corridor for the GTA and the City of Vaughan. Once implemented, it will contribute to economic and social sustainability by addressing existing transportation deficiencies and opportunities. Without the Corridor, Region of York and the City's transportation infrastructure will experience further reduction in level of service resulting in a significant slow-down of employment and residential growth in the City. The absence of the Corridor will also put a strain on the Province mandated ongoing employment and population growth planning to 2041.

The GTA West Corridor is required to address long-term inter-regional transportation infrastructure needs by providing critical and much needed east-west connectivity within the City of Vaughan and beyond. The necessary transportation network connectivity between Highway 400 and the future Highway 427 Extension is important to the success of the planned Highway 400 Employment Area and West Vaughan Employment Area.

Uncertainty on status of the GTA West Corridor affects the City's ability to conduct the Municipal Comprehensive Review within the timeline defined by Vaughan Council

The City is about to embark on the updating of the City's Growth Management Strategy and preparation of its Municipal Comprehensive/Official Plan Review to guide the City's growth and development to the year 2041. The intention of the OP review is to bring the City into conformity

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with the population and employment projections set out in Amendment No. 2 to the Provincial Growth Plan and maintain conformity with York Region Official Plan, which is now under review, with the adoption of a ROPA projected for the first/second quarter of 2017. It will also allow the City to make targeted amendments to the City's Official Plan, which may be identified by staff, agencies and the public. On November 17, 2015 Council directed that the resulting amendment be adopted in the first quarter of 2018.

Uncertainty over the GTA West Corridor alignment makes it impossible to finalize a land budget for the City of Vaughan due to the numerous blocks of land within the City potentially affected by alternative GTA West alignments. Furthermore, it is expected that the GTA will act as a key structural element for the City helping to influence the determination of land use designations (employment, residential, commercial, etc.) along with the location of community services.

In addition, the transportation and land use planning associated with the development in the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan and Blocks 27, 35 and 41 are significantly influenced by the outcome of the GTA West Corridor EA. Accordingly, it is important that the GTA West EA process resume and be completed as soon as possible.

Region of Peel and the Building Industry and Land Development Association are supportive of the completion of the GTA West Corridor EA

In late January 2016, Peel Regional Council passed a resolution requesting MTO to resume the GTA West EA immediately.

On March 1, 2016, the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) wrote a letter to the Region of York in support of the completion of the GTA West Corridor EA.

On March 3, 2016, Regional staff submitted a report to their Committee of the Whole recommending that the GTA West Corridor EA be resumed so the preferred corridor alignment can be defined as soon as possible.

Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018)

This report supports the following priorities set forth in Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018):

- Invest, renew and manage infrastructure and assets
- Improve municipal road network
- Attract investments and create jobs

Regional Implications

York Region staff is actively participating in the GTA West Corridor EA and have been attending the Municipal Advisory meetings.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Transportation has been undertaking the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study since 2007.

In early December 2015, the GTA West project team notified stakeholders that the Public Information Centre #2 would not take place as planned. Following that, on December 16, 2015, the Minister of Transportation announced that work on the GTA West Corridor was suspended pending further review to be concluded by spring 2016.

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The suspension of the study hinders the City's ability to complete the transportation and land use planning associated with the Municipal Comprehensive Review, which Council has directed to be completed by Q1 2018, along with the planning for the residential areas of the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan and the development in Blocks 27, 35 and 41. Accordingly, it is important that MTO resume and complete the GTA West Corridor EA as soon as possible.

Attachments

1. Short List of Route Alternatives and Potential Interchange Locations, as presented at Public Information Centre #1, December 2, 2014
2. Ministry of Transportation (Ontario) Bulletin – Ontario to Review Greater Toronto Area West Corridor Project, December 16, 2015

Report prepared by:

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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.)