

## **Staff Report 2019-0256**

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Meeting Date: December 3, 2019

Subject: Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study – Stage 2 Process Update

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the overview of comments on the Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, outlined in staff report 2019-0256 be endorsed;

That a copy of the report be forwarded to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, the Regions of Peel, York and Halton, and the Cities of Brampton, Mississauga and Vaughan and the Town of Halton Hills for their information.

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) initiated the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) Study to provide for the planned growth
- In November 2012, MTO released the Final Transportation Development Strategy Report marking the completion of Stage 1 of the process
- MTO initiated the Stage 2 of the GTA West EA Study in early 2014
- The Minister of Transportation announced the suspension of the GTA West Transportation Corridor EA Study in December 2016
- On June 19, 2019 the MTO announced the much-awaited resumption of the Stage 2 of the EA Study
- The report provides an update regarding the Public Information Centre # 2 presentation (October 2019) material regarding the Stage 2 of the process including the technically preferred route of the transportation corridor
- The new multi-modal transportation corridor along with the transit way is anticipated to be about 170 metre with 110 metre dedicated for a 4-6 lane highway with freeway-to-freeway connections at Highway 401/407, Highway 410, Highway 427 and Highway 400
- Staff recommends that MTO be requested to work with the Town to finalize the Highway 410 preferred alignment as route 10T
- Staff suggests that MTO be requested to provide GIS datasets and other associated information to conduct further assessment for the selection of the preferred alignment
- Staff recommends that MTO be requested to preserve the extension of Highway 427 to Highway 9 and beyond
- Staff suggests that MTO be requested to expedite the completion of the stage 2 of environmental assessment process for the GTA West Transportation Corridor

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this staff report is to:

- Update Town Council regarding the Public Information Centre # 2 of the Stage 2 of the GTA West Transportation Corridor Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study resumed by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation
- Identify the key issues that impact the Town's planned growth areas and its infrastructure
- Recommend appropriate response regarding MTO's plan for integrating Highway 410 with the new GTA West Transportation Corridor based on current information

### **Background**

In keeping with the Growth Plan, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) initiated the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) Study to provide for the planned growth.

Generally, the purpose of the GTA West EA Study is to address long-term inter-regional transportation infrastructure needs. The study considers alternative solutions as part of developing an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that will not only enable the efficient movement of people and goods but will also provide better economic and transportation linkages between urban growth centres. The GTA West transportation corridor is the key piece in providing the transportation infrastructure to meet the projected growth in population and employment identified in the *Growth Plan*. The study is being conducted in two stages.

#### Stage 1 of the EA Study Process

In November 2012, MTO released the Final Transportation Development Strategy (TDS) Report for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Study concluding the Stage 1 of the study. The report documents the multi-modal transportation strategy and designated a Preliminary Route Planning Study Area to be carried forward for Stage 2 work on Route Planning.

The key elements of the Final Transportation Development Strategy are as follows:

*Recommended Strategy*

- Optimizing the existing transportation infrastructure and network;
- Support implementation of the transit initiatives in Metrolinx RTP;
- Widen selected highways to provide additional capacity, including potential HOV lanes and multi-modal uses; including Highway 401 widening westerly through Milton Urban Area to 12 lanes; and
- A new transportation corridor from Highway 400 westerly and then southerly to connect to Highway 401/407ETR at the Halton-Peel boundary.

Additionally, an extension of the existing transportation corridors of Highway 427 and 410 are proposed to be integrated with the new GTA West Transportation Corridor.

Stage 2 of the EA Study Process

The MTO initiated Stage 2 of the GTA West EA Study in early 2014. Building on the recommendations from Stage 1, the EA study focused on identifying route alternatives, finalize route, determine interchange locations and complete the preliminary design for the new corridor within the defined Preliminary Route Planning Study Area. The new transportation corridor will include a 400-series highway, transitway, a potential goods movement priority feature. MTO conducted the first round of Public Information Centre (PIC) at various locations across the study area in the fall of 2014. It was anticipated that the project team was well on target to identify a single preferred alternative and alignment along with the interchange locations and the integration of Highway 410 with the new corridor by 2018.

While the MTO project team was preparing to present the preferred route at the PIC #2 on December 16, 2015, the Minister of Transportation issued a media bulletin announcing suspension of the GTA West Transportation Corridor EA Study.

**Current Status**

**Environmental Assessment Study Resumption: Stage 2 Process**

On June 19, 2019 the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) announced the much-awaited resumption of the Stage 2 of the Environmental Assessment (EA) Study for the GTA West Transportation Corridor.

This stage of the EA Study focuses on identifying the technically preferred route, determine interchange locations and complete the preliminary design for a new transportation corridor within the defined Preliminary Route Planning Study Area.

MTO conducted the second round of Public Information Centres (PIC) at various locations across the study area in September/October 2019. In accordance with the *Environmental Assessment Act*, the PIC sessions were organized by the MTO to engage public, stakeholders, residents, municipalities, conservation authorities and all interested persons/parties. Among other locations, the second round of PIC was also held at the Brampton Fair Grounds to engage the residents/businesses/stakeholders/council

members in the Town of Caledon on October 3, 2019. The purpose of the Public Information Centre (PIC) round 2 was to present:

- Study background and process;
- Existing Conditions within the study area;
- Evaluation of the short list of route and interchange location alternatives;
- Technically Preferred Route;
- Potential goods movement priority features;
- 2019 Focused Analysis Area; and
- Introduction to the Community Value Plans.

## **Highlights of Public Information Centre # 2 - Presentation Material**

### **1. Overall Stage 2 Study Process**

The stage 2 study process focuses on the recommendation for a new transportation corridor. The process is proposed to be carried out in 5 steps consisting of data collection, development of route planning alternatives, preliminary design, draft environmental assessment report and submission of final environmental assessment study report.

MTO developed and screened a long list of alternatives to arrive at a short list of route and interchange alternatives. Further evaluation of the short list of route alternatives and interchange locations was conducted to recommend a technically preferred route plan. Upon incorporating feedback/comments, the route plan will be subject to the preliminary design level of detail and will be presented at the PIC # 3 tentatively in the fall/winter 2021. The final EA study process is anticipated to be completed and submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) in 2022.

### **2. Route Evaluation Process**

MTO study team followed a three-step approach for route evaluation process:

- a) The research of the study area identified existing features and constraints through the site visits, secondary source information, agricultural operations survey.
- b) The study team amongst other things identified the impacts and mitigation opportunities based on stakeholder input, secondary source information and professional expertise.
- c) Finally, the short list of route alternatives were compared through both the reasoned argument approach and arithmetic method sensitivity testing to present the technically preferred route and confirm the Focused Analysis Area (FAA).

The Route Planning Study Area was divided into 9 sections to evaluate the short-listed route and interchange location alternatives. The 9 sections for ease of understanding can be categorized as below:

- a) *West Section* – comprising section 1 and 2 which are west of the Winston Churchill Boulevard from the Town of Caledon taking a southerly route to connect with Highway 407 ETR and ultimately with Highway 401.

- b) *Central Section* – is within the Town of Caledon starting from Winston Churchill Boulevard going easterly to Regional Road 50. The central section includes sections 2,3,4,5, and 6.
- c) *East Section* – It starts from Regional Road 50 to terminate at Highway 400. This section consists of sections 7, 8 and 9.

### 3. Preferred Transportation Corridor and Interchange Locations

The new multi-modal transportation corridor is anticipated to be about 170 metre with 110 metre dedicated for a 4-6 lane highway with freeway-to-freeway connections at Highway 401/407, Highway 410, Highway 427 and Highway 400. A separate adjacent transit way of 60 metre width is also included and the proposed transit stations will be located at interchanges and connection points. It is understood that the transmission corridor will be running parallel to the GTA West Transportation Corridor. The transmission corridor may approximately require/designate additional lands of approximately 39-44 metres.

Interchanges will be required at existing/planned freeways at Highway 401/407ETR, 410, 427, and 400 and at some arterial crossing roads. The potential interchanges were screened based on the following principles:

- Minimize impacts to significant natural features, functions, systems, and communities
- Minimize impacts to existing and planned (approved under Official Plans) areas
- Efficiently address the transportation problems and opportunities

Potential Interchanges in the Central Section are located on Chinguacousy, Hurontario, new Highway 410 connection, Bramalea, Airport, Gore and Coleraine Roads. Based on the evaluation criteria the proposed new corridor along with the preferred interchanges is provided in **Schedule A**.

### 4. Focused Analysis Area (FAA)

- MTO has narrowed down the Focus Analysis Area (Purple) from the earlier versions designated during the Stage1 and further work in 2015 which is a zone surrounding the preferred route.
- Properties located within the FAA could be directly impacted by the GTA West transportation corridor, be impacted by ancillary uses, or if refinements are made to the preferred route.
- MTO has also designated a green area within the route planning study area within which they will continue to review development applications, but it is anticipated that development processes may proceed for these lands.

The Public Information Centre # 2 presentation material can be downloaded from the MTO project website at [www.gta-west.com](http://www.gta-west.com)

**Staff Response: Key Issues for the Town of Caledon**

Based on the staff review of the Transportation Development Strategy (stage 1), Stage 2 PIC material, discussions at the Municipal Advisory Group meeting held on November 13, 2019, MTO's delegation to the Town Council on November 19, 2019 and various Provincial, Regional and Town staff level meetings, staff has identified the following key issues for Caledon:

**1. Mayfield West Community Development Plan**

The Mayfield West Secondary Plan (MW1) area is located north of Mayfield Road between Highway 10 and Dixie Road. The Plan was approved in 2007 proposing a community of approximately 9,000 people and including approximately 180 hectares of employment lands. Since then, developments have been taking place steadily and draft approvals and registrations are being issued. The proposed alternatives for highway-to-highway connection through this area are posing significant difficulties for the planned developments that have already been approved under the *Planning Act*.

Staff believes that for the orderly development of Mayfield West Area, it is imperative that the transportation network as envisioned in the Secondary Plan is coordinated and positioned in a timely manner. It is vital that east-west collector roads be implemented and constructed soon. This includes the west connection of Dougall Avenue to Highway 10/Hurontario Street and also of key importance is the east extension of Abbotside Way beyond its current terminus to connect both Heart Lake Road and as far as the development proceeds easterly preferably to Dixie Road. Both these collector roads will serve the proposed residential areas and filter the traffic generated from the employment areas.

Staff are concerned that municipal infrastructure required for the success of Mayfield West Community Development Plan (MW1) is being delayed/precluded by the ongoing provincial GTA West Transportation Corridor EA Study.

Town staff suggests that the Minister of Transportation be requested to direct provincial staff to work with the Town of Caledon to implement these road network connections so that impending developments in the MW1 area can progress expeditiously.

**2. Integration of Preferred Highway 410 (S5-10) and the GTA West Transportation Corridor**

The Town has continually expressed concerns regarding an anticipated extension of Highway 410 from its interchange at Mayfield Road through the approved lands for development identified as MW1.

The Province through MMAH entered into a Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) with the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel. The MOS identifies the study area and further recognizes it to be a "priority area", wherein the MTO study team will be proceeding expeditiously to identify the preferred route alignment of Highway 410 integrating with the proposed GTA West Transportation Corridor.

Based on the available information (PIC material) and follow-up discussions, staff believes that the preferred alignment impact the Town's MW1 area and do not meet its development objectives. Based on the transportation, land use and economic development perspective, the Town is proposing an alignment which requires S5-10 to go closer to Heart Lake Road and may potentially require a re-alignment of Heart Lake Road. This Highway 410 alignment not only provides direct connection but also avoids dividing the major employment lands into two parcels making them undevelopable for large scale employment area. The Town proposed Highway 410 alignment along with the Heart Lake road re-alignment is provided as **Schedule B** of this report and is shown as 10T. This town proposed highway alignment option was endorsed by the Council at their meeting of April 14, 2015 and reiterated again in their meeting of May 12, 2015 prior to the suspension of the study.

Considering the aforementioned, staff recommends that the Ontario Ministry of Transportation be requested to work with the Town to finalize the highway 410 preferred alignment as route 10T.

### 3. Preferred Route Alternative in Central Section

It is noted that in the absence of adequate data and GIS mapping, it is extremely difficult to make an assessment regarding the implications of the central section of the preferred route alignment. Staff suggests that MTO be requested to provide GIS datasets and other associated information to conduct a more informed assessment for the selection of the preferred alignment in each of the sections to ensure that there is minimum impact to the Town's agricultural/farming areas, land use objectives and the transportation network.

### 4. Preferred Interchange Locations

It is noted that there are seven (7) interchange locations identified in the central section of the study area. MTO has generally identified interchange locations with regional arterial roads except at Chinguacousy and Bramalea roads which are both under the Town jurisdiction. However, it should be noted that Town Roads are not anticipated to carry high volumes of traffic and to perform the function entailed for highway interchanges. If at all, the Town roads are selected to be Interchange locations, these roads will have to be upgraded to regional arterial standards which could be costly. The Town, Region and the MTO appropriately will have to determine the funding of these expensive upgrades at some future time.

**Importantly, it is noted through the PIC #2 materials, the Coleraine Drive Interchange as identified will impact the approved Coleraine West employment lands which are in the advanced stage of development. Staff raised concerns and had initial consultation with the MTO, Region of Peel and the City of Brampton on October 17, 2019. The meeting resulted in positive outcome with MTO confirming that the Coleraine Drive Interchange will no longer be located as depicted in the released technically preferred route.**

MTO further assured that the study team will identify and explore other technically viable options in consultation with the affected municipalities to minimize the impacts to Coleraine West employment lands.

**5. Northerly Extension of Highway 427**

The Town of Caledon has requested numerous times since 1999 to the Province of Ontario that potential corridor land for the further extension of Highway 427 to Highway 9 and beyond be protected. The northerly extension of the Highway 427 was justified by MTO's own study in the 1990s. The extension is expected to significantly reduce the through traffic along Regional Road 50 through Bolton. It is therefore important to ensure the integration of Highway 427 and the GTA West Transportation Corridor Route Planning and EA study does not preclude/prejudice its future extension options.

**6. Impacts on Agricultural/Farming Operations**

It should be noted that the Town of Caledon has a substantial agricultural economy including large farming operations. Staff is concerned that the GTA West Transportation Corridor will cause a considerable impact on many Caledon farming operations. Given that major portions of the Town's prime agricultural land will be affected by the GTA West Corridor, the impacts on Town's residential and agricultural communities need to be considered while finalizing this stage of the study in order to balance the long-term viability of agricultural operations and transportation planning needs of the Province. Concerns have been raised that large farm holdings will be separated resulting in remaining unviable working farms.

**7. Timelines**

It is noted that MTO will present the preliminary design of the preferred route at the PIC # 3 in the fall/winter of 2021. Subsequently, the final Environmental Study Report is slated to be submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) in late 2022. Staff believes that the timelines for the GTA West Study process be aligned with the ongoing review of the Town's Official Plan (to be completed in early 2022), 2041 work and other associated studies to ensure that the recommendations of the GTA West Transportation Environmental Assessment Study are appropriately incorporated.

Accordingly, staff recommends that MTO be requested to expedite the completion of the stage 2 of environmental assessment process for the GTA West Transportation Corridor.

**Overview of Comments**

Staff suggest that Council endorse the following overview of staff comments requesting Ministry of Transportation to:

- a) pursue Town's preferred alignment for Highway 410 namely 10T (Schedule B) to integrate with the GTA West Transportation Corridor within the MW1 lands;
- b) explore technically viable options to locate Coleraine Drive Interchange to minimize the impacts on the approved Coleraine West employment lands;
- c) carry forward all preferred interchanges in Caledon for further assessment;
- d) preserve the extension of Highway 427 northerly to Highway 9;
- e) provide GIS mapping and other associated information to conduct further assessment for the selection of the preferred alignment;
- f) work with the Town for the extension of Dougall Avenue and Abbotside Road to support MW1 approved lands;



- g) continue to work with the agricultural/farming community in the Town to balance the needs between agriculture and transportation and;
- h) expedite the completion of the stage 2 of environmental assessment process.

Please note that staff provided preliminary comments during the public information centre and subsequent meetings with the MTO staff including the recent staff municipal advisory group meeting on November 13, 2019.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Town staff recommendations above reflect the optimal scenarios that will provide the best-case financial outcome related to the GTA West Corridor for the Town of Caledon. Preserving the employment lands will result in additional tax revenue for the Town, jobs and development charge revenue. Allowing these employment lands in Mayfield West 1 (MW) to develop along with the necessary infrastructure will align with the development outlined in the MW Development Charge Credit agreement and Master Financial Agreement dated September 26, 2006 that was developed with the MW landowners to provide infrastructure as planned for in the MW secondary plan and included in the Town's 2019 Development Charges background study. More information would be needed to determine the specific financial implications, if the GTA West Corridor was to deviate from Town staff's recommendations.

## **COUNCIL WORK PLAN**

### **Sustainable Growth**

- Continue to advocate for vital provincial highway infrastructure including HWY 427 Extension and HWY 413 (GTA West Corridor) construction

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Staff report and the council resolution to be sent to the Ministry of Transportation, Region of Peel and area municipalities
- Staff to work with the MTO project team during the EA process to ensure that the process is consistent with Town objectives/timeslines.
- Staff will report the progress of the study to Council as appropriate.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Schedule A: Preferred Route Alignment

Schedule B: Town of Caledon Proposed Highway 410 Alignment (10T)