
For Information

REPORT TITLE: Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

FROM: Andrea Warren, Interim Commissioner of Public Works

OBJECTIVE

To provide Regional Council with information to inform its decision-making on a motion to: oppose advanced construction associated with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) West Corridor and Transmission Corridor; support the request for a federal designation of the project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*; and oppose in principle construction of any transportation corridor transversing Peel, specifically the GTA West 413 highway and Transmission Corridor, which was referred to staff on February 25, 2021.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- At the February 25, 2021 Regional Council Meeting, a motion was brought forward to: a) oppose advanced construction associated with the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor; b) support the request for a federal designation of the project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*; and c) oppose in principle construction of any transportation corridor transversing Peel, specifically the GTA West 413 highway and Transmission Corridor.
- The motion was referred to Regional staff to bring back a report regarding the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment project history and the impact of adopting the motion on Regional interests including planning, transportation, environment, climate change and finance.
- The advancement of construction prior to the completion of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) may result in unforeseen impacts to the Region and as such, opposition to any advanced construction in preparation for the GTA West Highway and Transmission Corridor would not be in conflict with the Region's interests.
- If approved, the designation of the GTA West Corridor project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)* may extend the timeframe required to complete the GTA West Corridor EA however it may also provide opportunities to further examine the climate change, environment, and health impacts of the project. These examinations can also be realized through the Ministry of Transportation's GTA West Corridor EA in lieu of a federal impact assessment and could be done through working with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority to implement a Voluntary Project Review process and by conducting a fulsome Health Impact Assessment.
- The referred motion, if adopted and implemented by the cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would require re-evaluation of some technical elements of the ongoing MCR to plan for 2051 growth but would not appear to impact the overall directions such as increased intensification, increased density, more sustainable modes of transportation, balanced job growth, addressing climate change and enhancing the natural environment.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

- Any increase in infrastructure requirements to address growth due to the cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would put pressure on development charges, capital reserves and ultimately property taxes.
-

DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

This report is intended to assist Regional Council in its decision making on a motion regarding the GTA West Transportation Corridor (GTA West Corridor) Environmental Assessment (EA) referred to staff at the February 25, 2021 Regional Council meeting:

- a) oppose advanced construction associated with the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor;
- b) support the request for a federal designation of the project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*; and
- c) oppose in principle construction of any transportation corridor transversing Peel, specifically the GTA West 413 highway and Transmission Corridor

The report is structured under four key sections: (1) a history of the GTA West Corridor and Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Study; (2) an overview of the considerations for the Region associated with adopting each of the key parts of the referred motion; (3) the environmental, agricultural, climate change, and health impacts of the proposed GTA West Corridor; (4) financial implications.

A summary of the key considerations under each section of the report can be found in Appendix I.

2. Background

In 2008, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify solutions to link urban growth centres in the western Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The study eventually became known as the GTA West Transportation Corridor (GTA West Corridor) EA and the preliminary study area spanned broadly from York Region to Guelph.

In 2010 the Region of Peel, Halton Region, City of Brampton, and the Towns of Halton Hills and Caledon jointly completed the Halton-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS) which identified the need for a north-south corridor in the Halton Peel Boundary Area with connections to the future GTA West Corridor and Highway 401/407 interchange.

Subsequently, in 2012, the MTO concluded stage 1 of the GTA West Corridor EA which examined various transportation alternatives including transit, transportation demand management, and roads and highways along with other modes, and released the Transportation Development Strategy (TDS). The TDS identified the need for a combination of: a) the optimization of existing transportation networks; b) new and expanded non-road infrastructure (transit, rail, etc); c) road widenings; and d) a new 400-series highway and transitway spanning from Highway 400 in the City of Vaughan to the Halton-Peel boundary with connections to Highways 427, 410, and the 401/407 interchange. Through the TDS, the MTO also revised the study area for the EA and the western section largely coincided with

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

the HPBATS study area. In 2013, the HPBATS recommendations were referred to the MTO to review and implement through the GTA West Corridor EA.

In 2015, the Province of Ontario suspended the GTA West Corridor EA and appointed an advisory panel to examine the project. Subsequently in 2018, the MTO cancelled the GTA West Corridor EA based on the advisory panel's recommendation in light of climate change and emerging technologies.

In 2019, following a change in Provincial government, the MTO resumed the GTA West Corridor EA. At that time, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines also initiated a new study called the Northwest Transmission Corridor Identification Study (Transmission Corridor Study) to identify lands adjacent to the GTA West Corridor for a future transmission corridor.

In 2020, the MTO confirmed the Preferred Route for the GTA West Corridor (See Appendix II) and the Province of Ontario also proposed a regulation to streamline the GTA West Corridor EA.

In February 2021, the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change received a request from Ecojustice on behalf of Environmental Defence to designate the proposed GTA West Corridor Project under subsection 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*.

On February 24, 2021, the City of Mississauga passed a motion approving:

1. Strong opposition to any and all advanced construction associated with preparations for a GTA West highway and transmission corridor
2. Full support of the Environmental Defence request for a Federal Environmental Assessment pursuant to s.9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*; and
3. Strong opposition in principle, to construction of any transportation corridor transversing the Region of Peel, but specifically the currently proposed GTA West 413 Highway and transmission corridor

A similar motion was raised at the February 25, 2021 Regional Council meeting and the motion was referred to staff to report back on GTA West project history and planning impacts.

3. Proposed GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor Motion Referred to Staff

The following sections provide an overview of the considerations for the Region associated with adopting each of the key parts of the referred motion:

a) Strong opposition to any and all advanced construction associated with preparations for a GTA West highway and transmission corridor

On July 8, 2020, the Province of Ontario proposed a regulation to streamline the GTA West Corridor EA. If approved, the streamlined process would permit certain "Early Works" to proceed to construction prior to the completion of the GTA West Corridor EA. As limited details were provided on the proposed changes to the EA process, Regional staff have requested further information to better understand implications to the Region.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

Examples of some preliminary Early Works activities identified in the proposed regulation include new bridge construction, bridge replacement and expansion, transitway station construction, and utility relocation.

These activities may have significant impacts on natural and environmental systems and health outcomes in Peel and opportunities to avoid, mitigate, or minimize the impacts would be identified through the completion of the EA. As such, opposition to early works associated with preparations for the GTA West Corridor and transmission corridor would not be in conflict with the Region's interests. It should be noted that, if approved, the regulation to streamline the GTA West Corridor EA would only apply to the GTA West Corridor EA and not the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Study.

b) Full support of the Environmental Defence request for a Federal Environmental Assessment pursuant to s.9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*

The *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)* sets out the federal process by which certain projects (designated on a project list or by the Federal Minister of the Environment (the "Minister") are required to be assessed for impacts to the environment falling under federal jurisdiction, prior to construction of the project. Generally, environmental matters under federal jurisdiction include migratory birds and certain species at risk, matters that involve federal fisheries and navigable waters, matters related to climate change (though this is not an exclusive jurisdiction), and all matters related to nuclear safety.

Should a ministerial designation of the project be made, the Minister will have to decide whether a Federal Impact Assessment is to be conducted. It should be noted that a Federal Impact Assessment does not automatically supersede the Provincial environmental assessment process. Should a Federal Impact Assessment be required, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada will be required to work with the Provincial Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) to develop a Cooperation Plan and ensure that the assessment consider potential environmental, health, social and economic impacts of proposed projects, including benefits.

To inform the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change's decision on the designation request, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) sought the following input from municipalities impacted by the GTA West Corridor by March 3rd, 2021:

- a. whether any bylaws or requirements of the Region of Peel apply to the Project
- b. whether the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is addressing the interests and issues of importance related to Peel matters.

While Regional Council has not taken a position on the designation request made by Ecojustice, Regional staff have provided a response to the IAAC which provides an overview of the Region's Official Plan policy framework as it relates to the GTA West Transportation Corridor and Environmental Protection, acknowledgement of MTO's work with staff to date, an overview of outstanding matters of Regional interest, and an overview of the local municipal positions (See Appendix II)

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

In response to IAAC's request, the Councils of the Town of Caledon and City of Mississauga have expressed support for designation of the proposed GTA West Transportation Corridor Project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)*. City of Brampton Council, at its March 3rd, 2021 meeting, will be considering the February 24, 2021 recommendations of the Committee of Council expressing support for the designation (See Appendix II).

Should the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change approve the designation, the timeframe required to complete the GTA West Corridor EA will likely be extended.

Regardless of the outcome of the IAA request, regional staff will continue to advocate for MTO's GTA West Corridor EA to comprehensively identify, avoid, minimize, and mitigate environmental, climate change and health impacts. Committing to work with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to implement a Voluntary Project Review and conducting a fulsome Health Impact Assessment (HIA) are two ways by which the Provincial EA process can address many of these impacts. However, no commitment to conduct this work has been received from MTO to date.

If a designation and subsequent decision to require a Federal Impact Assessment is made, such an assessment could present the opportunity to further study, identify and address positive and negative health outcomes associated with all phases of the proposed GTA West Corridor, and identify challenges and opportunities to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other climate change impacts of the GTA West Corridor which are explained further in Section 3 of this report.

c) Strong opposition in principle, to construction of any transportation corridor transversing the Region of Peel, but specifically the currently proposed GTA West 413 Highway and transmission corridor

The following subsections discuss the potential implications should the above resolution clause be supported. However, it should be noted that staff are interpreting "any transportation corridor" to be specifically the GTA West Transportation Corridor.

i) Region of Peel Responsibilities Prescribed by Provincial Policy

According to the *Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, 2020)* and *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan, 2020)*, the Region of Peel is obligated to plan for and protect corridors for infrastructure including transportation, transit, electricity generation, and transmission systems to meet current and projected needs. The Growth Plan includes a planned future transportation corridor in the vicinity of the GTA West Corridor

The PPS, 2020 also prohibits municipalities from permitting development within planning corridors that could preclude or negatively affect the use of the corridor for the purpose(s) for which it was identified and goes on to prescribe that any new development proposed on adjacent lands to existing or planned corridors. It further prescribes that transportation facilities should be compatible with, and supportive of, the long-term purposes of the corridor and should be designed to avoid, mitigate or minimize negative impacts on and from the corridor and transportation facilities.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

In accordance with the above Provincial direction, the Region has adopted corridor protection policies through various Regional Official Plan Amendments including ROPA 32 (North West Brampton Shale) and ROPA 30 (BRES) recently approved and ROPA 26 (Transportation policies approved in 2012 currently under appeal).

Should Regional Council oppose the construction of the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor, and no decision is made by the Province to formally cancel the project, the Region of Peel would still be obligated to plan for and protect the two corridors. As such, the Region would need to consider how the infrastructure planning provisions of the Growth Plan and PPS would be addressed in the ongoing planning work.

ii) Matters of Regional Interest if the GTA West Transportation Corridor and Transmission Corridor are Cancelled

If the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor Study being undertaken by the Province are cancelled, there would be planning, growth, and infrastructure considerations, which are discussed below:

Planning for Short-term 2031 Growth

The Region has planned for 2031 population and employment growth, as allocated through the *Growth Plan, 2006*, assuming the GTA West Corridor will be constructed and some limited infrastructure servicing has begun.

As mandated by the Province, development in the areas identified to accommodate growth and settlement expansion to 2031 will continue to be impacted by the corridor protection policies and legislated freezes. New greenfield areas impacted by the GTA West Corridor preferred route include Northwest Brampton (200 hectares), Ninth Line (20 hectares) and the Bolton Residential Expansion Area (35 hectares). Other areas impacted include older greenfield expansions like the Bramwest, Northeast Brampton, and emerging greenfield growth areas to 2051.

Should the GTA West Corridor project be cancelled, the uncertainty about the process and outcomes to replace that planning would likely extend delays in the Regional and local municipal planning processes for areas such as North West Brampton, North East Brampton (SP47) and Bolton, delaying the time when both housing and jobs can ultimately be available as required to meet growth forecasts.

Planning for Long-term 2051 Growth: The Peel 2041+ Municipal Comprehensive Review

Through the Peel 2041+ Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), the Region is planning for growth to the year 2051 as forecasted in the *Growth Plan, 2019*. From 2021 to 2051, the Region is planned to grow by an additional 700,000 people and 360,000 jobs. Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, staff would need to further assess the implications on the technical studies that have been undertaken to support the various focus areas of the Region's MCR which plan for this growth.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

The referred motion would not appear to impact the overall directions of the ongoing MCR such as increased intensification, increased density, more sustainable modes of transportation, balanced job growth, addressing climate change, healthy development and enhancing the natural environment. However, the cancellation of the GTA West corridor would require re-evaluation of some elements of review such as the transportation, financial analysis, Major Transit Station Areas, and Settlement Area Boundary Expansion MCR focus areas. Agricultural and environmental implications in the vicinity of the corridor would also require re-evaluation. This could potentially delay the MCR by several months depending on the scope of the updates required, however it is expected that the Provincial approval deadline of July 1, 2022, could still be met.

Growth Management Focus Area: The Region's detailed population and employment growth allocations have been drafted assuming the GTA West Corridor would be a factor in the location of growth, particularly in the employment sector. The distribution of growth and development may need to be revisited somewhat should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled. However, the overall growth population, housing and employment needs and distribution are expected to remain largely intact.

With less direct highway linkages to future employment areas, achieving employment forecasts may be more difficult and take longer than if the areas were directly served by the GTA West Corridor. The absence of the GTA West Corridor could impact future decisions about the siting of new employment land designations within southern Caledon and direct the development to areas along Mayfield Road, Hurontario and Airport Road which do have good connections to Highway 410, the planned Highway 427 extension and other goods movement infrastructure.

Settlement Area Boundary Expansion Study: The Settlement Area Boundary Expansion (SABE) technical studies undertaken to date have included the GTA West Corridor as part of the analysis. These studies are required by the Growth Plan to support selection of the draft SABE. Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, some studies would need to be updated to determine if the recommendations would change without the GTA West Corridor. Also, assumptions included in the detailed water and wastewater and transportation infrastructure assessments that are currently underway would need to be revisited. It is possible that these updates may result in some changes to the draft conceptual SABE as presented to Council on December 10, 2020.

Climate Change Focus Area: This focus area proposes policies that aim to: increase intensification and density through mixed use and transit supported development; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants through sustainable and active transportation; protect, restore and enhance Peel's natural systems and water resources; promote energy efficiency and conservation, including green development standards; and identify and protect prime agriculture lands. The cancellation of the GTA West Transportation Corridor would support the intent of these policies. Note that additional information on environment, agriculture, climate change and health considerations is provided below.

Major Transit Station Area Focus Area: This focus area plans for the land use implementation around transit stations and would not be impacted by the

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

cancellation of the GTA West Corridor. The Region has been monitoring the status of the potential transit stations along the GTA West Corridor transitway, but they have not been identified in the draft Major Transit Station Area Regional Official Plan Amendment (MTSA ROPA).

Transportation Focus Area: The policies proposed under this focus area support a balanced approach in planning the Region's transportation system. The policies ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods by both vehicles and sustainable modes such as transit, walking, cycling, and carpooling. Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, the Region would have to review the GTA West Corridor Protection Policies and identify, plan for and protect for an alternative transportation solution to meet current and projected needs through the MCR process.

Long Range Transportation Plan

It is anticipated that morning peak hour trips within the Region of Peel will increase by approximately 40 per cent or 303,000 added trips by 2041. In order to accommodate future travel demand, the Region's Long Range Transportation Plan, 2019 (LRTP) recommends a balanced approach of achieving a 50 per cent sustainable mode share in combination with limited road widenings by 2041. The LRTP assumes the GTA West Corridor will be implemented to help facilitate the forecasted movement of people and goods and to alleviate demand from the Regional road network.

Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, Regional staff would be required to undertake an update to the LRTP. Based on a preliminary analysis conducted in 2018 during the previous cancellation of the GTA West Corridor, Regional staff expect that:

- A north-south corridor along the Halton-Peel boundary will still be required in some form to accommodate future growth, as identified in the HPBATS;
- General increases in traffic volumes and congestion may occur on most arterial roads in Brampton, southern Caledon, and northern Mississauga; and
- Changes will be required to the Region's planned road and sustainable transportation network, including but not limited to:
 - the addition of new road infrastructure, including road widenings, to support travel demand generated by future growth; and
 - the removal of some planned road infrastructure currently in place to support GTA West interchange traffic.

It is expected that the anticipated travel demand will further increase by 2051 requiring additional infrastructure needs.

Goods Movement

The Region of Peel is home to the Toronto Pearson International Airport, which is Canada's largest and busiest airport by freight and passenger volume. It is expected that by 2037, Pearson Airport is forecasted to process upwards of 85 million passengers, 1 million tonnes of cargo, which will facilitate over 700,000 jobs in Ontario. The Region is directly adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Vaughan intermodal terminal

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

and is home to the Canadian National (CN) Brampton Intermodal terminal, which is currently the largest in Canada. Approximately 13,000 trucks travel in and out of the CN intermodal facility weekly using the Regional road network. Further, the Region of Peel has received United Nations University Regional Centre of Expertise designation. The Peel Regional Centre of Expertise network will connect Region's strategies globally, and will heighten external partnerships for goods movement and sustainable transportation.

Currently, many of Peel's arterial roadways experience truck volumes that are representative of Provincial highways. These volumes are expected to increase as a result of future growth and development. Goods movement is a significant contributor to Peel's economy, and the GTA West which is expected to include truck priority features will act as an important corridor by diverting a portion of trucks from using Regional roads and existing congested highways. Any subsequent EA planning stage or Federal Impact Assessment may provide the opportunity to consider alternative solutions for accommodating goods movement.

Cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would be expected to result in an increase of heavy truck traffic on the Regional road network as a result of future growth and development, and would also require the exploration of alternative solutions to accommodate goods movement.

Addressing Future Electricity Needs

The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) has identified a need in their Integrated Regional Resource Plan for the Northwest Greater Toronto Sub Region (i.e. Northern Brampton/Southern Caledon) to provide additional transformer and transmission line capacity to meet forecasted demand for growth. Should the study to identify lands for a future transmission corridor be terminated, additional studies would be required to determine how needs could be met through combination of alternate corridors and net zero energy communities supported through energy conservation and decentralized, low carbon energy sources (ex. district energy). Notwithstanding, it should be noted that should the GTA West Corridor EA Study be cancelled, the Transmission Corridor Study could still move forward separately from the highway as it is a separate study.

4. Environment, Climate Change and Health Considerations of the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor to Peel Region

It should be noted that the GTA West Corridor has impacts to the natural environment and agricultural lands in Peel as well as implications to health and climate change. The following sections outline considerations to the Region of Peel assuming the corridor is in place.

a) Natural Environment Considerations

A detailed analysis of the impacts and net environmental effects of the highway/transitway right-of-way has not been completed at this time. However, environmental impacts of route alternatives have been provided in EA reports completed by MTO and in technical submissions by TRCA and CVC in their capacity as commenting agencies.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

In Peel, approximately 163 hectares of Greenlands System natural features and areas within the preferred route are potentially impacted. The route alignment requires 22 crossings of defined valley corridors in Peel and 26 crossings of watercourses. Significant crossings include the Credit River, Etobicoke Creek and West Humber River tributaries. Connectivity and function of the Greenlands System along valleylands and watercourses for the movement of plants and animals is potentially impacted.

The linear nature and design of the highway/transitway make it difficult to avoid loss of sensitive environmental features. In some cases, impacts can be mitigated to minimize or avoid impacts. As environmental assessment processes typically consider a range of financial, social, and environmental considerations, any subsequent EA planning stages should include substantive effort to avoid and minimize impacts along with the consideration of compensation for loss of habitat where warranted.

b) Agricultural Considerations

Large portions of the GTA West study area are comprised of Class 1 to 3 prime agricultural lands. Prime agricultural lands have the highest capability to support sustained production of common field crops. In Peel, approximately 708 ha of prime agricultural land is potentially impacted in the preferred route area. The highway/transitway will require property acquisitions and this will have the potential to fragment farm parcels, remove farm buildings and impact farm infrastructure.

In 2019, the MTO identified the approach that was being undertaken to evaluate and mitigate impacts. The Guideline for Planning and Design of the GTA West Corridor through the Greenbelt was referenced as guidance to MTO to address impacts to agriculture. This guidance references standard mitigation and compensation measures for direct agricultural impacts, mitigation for farm equipment access on side roads and mitigation during and after construction. The location of the MTO's preferred route alignment bisects the Prime Agricultural Area in southern Caledon which results in the loss and fragmentation of agricultural land. Like the assessment of the impact to the natural environment, any subsequent EA planning process should apply compensation and mitigation considerations in the design of the corridor.

c) Climate Change Considerations

The 2012 Transportation Development Study found that due to possible congestion relief the GTA West Corridor would result in a slight reduction in GHG emissions during peak hours relative to the base case. In contrast, the 2015 Provincially appointed Advisory Panel found that these findings may have been overstated. In reviewing the literature, multiple transportation studies have found that adding capacity to roadways fails to sustain congestion alleviation due to increased vehicle kilometers traveled (VKT). Increased VKTs directly result in increases in GHG emissions. In light of these inconsistencies there is a need for the comprehensive accounting of GHG emissions as they relate to the GTA West Corridor, which should be considered in any subsequent EA planning or Federal Impact Assessment.

Further, the impacts of new technologies such as electric vehicles may influence climate change over time and should also be further studied through any subsequent EA planning or Federal Impact Assessment.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

Natural systems provide cost effective ecological services and resiliency in response to climate change threats such as more frequent and extreme heat and flooding. With the potential impacts to the Greenlands System natural features and sensitive natural areas cited in the earlier Natural Environment section, the GTA West Corridor would reduce the level or effectiveness of these ecological services through direct loss of habitat and could limit local communities' ability to adapt to climate change threats. There are also potential impacts to groundwater and wells through the use of road salt and indirect impacts of climate change. Any subsequent EA planning stages or Federal Impact Assessment should consider how best to mitigate the highway's impact and protect the resiliency of the natural systems and associated ecological services.

The cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would provide opportunity for exploration of alternative growth and transportation solutions that support climate change outcomes and consider emerging technologies, such as; compact complete communities, low carbon decentralized energy, sustainable transportation networks, and greater transit investment. However, the net impact to climate change and implications to achieving the Region's climate policies and community GHG emissions reduction target (80 per cent by 2050), can only be determined once an alternative growth and transportation solution to the corridor is identified.

d) Health Considerations

The way our communities and transportation networks are designed, built and operated can have a significant impact directly and indirectly on the health and well-being of the community, particularly vulnerable populations. Transportation decisions influence health behaviour, which in turn impact rates of chronic disease (e.g., diabetes), physical activity, as well as air quality (e.g., respiratory illness and other impacts), water quality, access to healthy foods, noise levels, mental health and road related injuries and death. The direct and indirect health care costs associated with these impacts are significant. To assess the health impacts of the GTA West, Regional staff have requested that MTO complete a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as part of the EA process. An HIA is an evidence-informed multi-disciplinary framework that evaluates the potential impacts, both positive or negative, that a project or policy could have on health, and the distribution of those impacts within the community (i.e., health equity). An HIA extends beyond the physical impacts on health that are typically assessed (e.g., air quality, noise) and provides a health lens, whereby impacts are identified, and recommendations emerge that optimize health. An HIA prioritizes human health and provides information on the potential health impacts of a project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would likely result in additional infrastructure requirements to address future growth which would have to be funded by either the Region or local municipalities. The increased infrastructure would put pressure on development charges, capital reserves, and ultimately operating costs and property taxes. However, as the transportation solutions to address impacts of any increased volume have not been defined yet, no estimated cost can be provided. The capital costs in particular may be significant, however staff will be in a better position to assess financial impacts once potential options to deal with any increased volume are better known.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the following is a summary of the various considerations Regional Council should be aware of in relation to the GTA West project:

1. Opposition to any advanced construction in preparation for the GTA West Highway and Transmission Corridor would not be in conflict with the Region's interests.
2. If approved, the designation of the GTA West Corridor project under s. 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019 (Canada)* may extend the timeframe required to complete the GTA West Corridor EA however it may also provide opportunities to further examine the climate change, environment, and health impacts of the project. Detailed examination of climate change, environment, and health impacts can also be realized through the MTO's GTA West Corridor EA in lieu of a federal impact assessment and could be done through working with the TRCA to implement a VPR process and by conducting a fulsome HIA.
3. Should Regional Council choose to oppose the GTA West Corridor, the Region nevertheless has an obligation to plan for and protect the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor as prescribed in Provincial Policies and consequently, there would be no change to the Region's transportation and growth management planning unless the project is cancelled by the Province.
4. Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, the impact to climate change and health and transportation planning can only be determined once an alternative growth and transportation solution to the corridor is determined.
5. Any increase in infrastructure requirements to address growth due to the cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would put pressure on development charges, capital reserves and ultimately property taxes to an extent that cannot be quantified at this time.

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Summary of Key Messages within the March 11, 2021 GTA West Corridor Staff Report

Appendix II - Preferred Route for the GTA West Corridor (2020)

Appendix III - Region of Peel Staff Response to the IAAC Regarding Request for a Designation of the GTA West Corridor

For further information regarding this report, please contact Adrian Smith, Chief Planner, Ext. 4047, Adrian.Smith@peelregion.ca or Terry Ricketts, Director, Transportation Division, Ext.4100, Terry.Ricketts@peelregion.ca

Authored By: Richa Dave, Principal Planner, Sustainable Transportation & Strategic Initiatives; Mark Head, Manager, Integrated Planning; Joy Simms, Principal Planner, Regional Planning & Growth Management; Jeremy Schembri, Manager, Climate Change & Energy Management

Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Directors and Legal Services.