

Summary of Key Messages: GTA West Transportation Corridor – Project History and Planning Impacts

At the February 25, 2021 Regional Council Meeting, a motion was raised concerning the GTA West Transportation Corridor (GTA West Corridor) Environmental Assessment (EA) and referred to staff for a report. The motion proposed that Regional Council:

- 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 following provides a summary of considerations discussed in more detail in the Report:

Early Works:

- 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.

Federal IAA Request:

- If a decision to require a Federal Impact Assessment is made, it could present an opportunity to further identify challenges and opportunities to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other climate change impacts of the GTA West Corridor, and identify and address health outcomes of the proposed GTA West Corridor.
- Regardless of the outcome of the IAA request, Regional staff will continue to advocate for the 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 could assess many of these impacts. However, no commitment to conduct this work has been received from MTO to date

Opposition to Construction of GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor:

- Should Regional Council oppose the construction of the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor, the Region of Peel would still be obligated to plan for and protect the two corridors and 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

Cancellation of the GTA West Corridor and Transmission Corridor

- Short-term Growth - Should the GTA West Corridor project be cancelled, outcomes to replace that planning process would likely delay planning for areas such as North West Brampton, North East Brampton (SP47) and Bolton.
- Long-term Growth - Opposition to the GTA West corridor would have little impact on the overall directions of the Region's 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, some focus areas would require reevaluation such as transportation, financial analysis, Major Transit Station Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansion. Agricultural and environmental implications in the vicinity of the corridor would also require reevaluation. Should Regional Council oppose construction of the GTA West Corridor, the Region would be required to consider how the infrastructure planning provisions of the Growth Plan and PPS would be addressed in the ongoing planning work.

- Employment - With less direct highway linkages, achieving employment forecasts may be more difficult and take longer than if areas were directly served by the GTA West Corridor and would impact future decisions about the siting of new employment land designations within southern Caledon.
- Long Range Transportation Planning - Should the GTA West Corridor be cancelled, staff would be required to undertake an update to the Long Range Transportation Plan. A preliminary analysis conducted in 2018 found that a north-south corridor along the Halton-Peel boundary would still be required in some form to accommodate future growth; 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, which may include road widenings to support travel demand generated by future growth.
- Goods Movement - Cancellation of the GTA West Corridor is expected to result in increased heavy truck traffic on the municipal road network as a result of future growth; alternative solutions will be required to accommodate goods movement.
- Electricity Needs - The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) requires additional transformer and transmission line capacity to meet forecasted demand in Northern Brampton/Southern Caledon. Should the study to identify lands for a future transmission corridor stop, other studies would be required to determine how needs could be met.
- Natural Environment - The linear nature of a highway makes it difficult to avoid loss of sensitive environmental features. In some cases, impacts can be mitigated through planning and a substantive effort to avoid and minimize environmental loss, as well as compensation for loss of habitat where warranted.
- Agriculture - Approximately 708 ha of prime agricultural lands would potentially be impacted by portions of the GTA West preferred route. The highway/transitway will require property acquisitions. This requirement is likely to fragment farm parcels, remove farm buildings and impact farm infrastructure in some instances.
- Climate change - A comprehensive GHG emissions accounting for the GTA West Highway is needed. 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 system and associated ecological services that help local communities adapt to climate threats. However, cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would provide opportunity for exploration of alternative growth and sustainable transportation solutions that could result in overall positive impact on climate change.

- Health - The transportation network has significant implications for the health and well-being of the community, particularly vulnerable populations. Health considerations for transportation projects broadly include active transportation, safety, air and water quality, noise, connectivity, mental health, well-being and health equity. To assess the health impacts of the GTA West highway, staff have requested that MTO complete a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to evaluate the potential impacts on health and the distribution of those impacts within the community. Cancellation of the GTA West highway would require alternative methods to meet transportation demands, and an HIA of the alternatives.
- Financial - The cancellation of the GTA West Corridor would likely result in additional infrastructure requirements to address future growth. The increased infrastructure would put increased pressure on development charges, capital reserves, and ultimately increased operating costs and property taxes to an extent which is not quantifiable at this time.

This Appendix provides a summary of the various considerations Regional Council should be aware of in relation to the GTA West project. These concepts are outlined in more detail within the Report.