
For Information

REPORT TITLE: GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment – Preferred Route Update

FROM: Andrew Farr, Interim Commissioner of Public Works

OBJECTIVE

To provide Regional Council with an update on the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On August 7, 2020, the Ministry of Transportation confirmed the Preferred Route and 2020 Focused Analysis Area for the GTA West Transportation Corridor.
 - Regional staff are generally supportive of the Preferred Route, but are seeking clarity on the rationale for, and/or impacts of, the route in the following areas: Northwest Brampton, the Humber Station Road (formerly Coleraine Drive) interchange and the Ninth Line lands.
 - Regional staff continue to advocate for further studies to better understand the Traffic, Agricultural/Environmental and Health impacts of the Preferred Route and identify appropriate mitigation measures.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) is a study undertaken by the Ministry of Transportation to improve connectivity between Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Toronto Area and consists of a new freeway with an adjacent transitway spanning from Highway 400 in Vaughan to the Halton-Peel boundary.

On September 19, 2019, the Ministry of Transportation (the Ministry) released the Technically Preferred Route and proposed interchange locations for the GTA West Transportation Corridor at a Public Information Centre to solicit public and stakeholder comments and feedback. The Technically Preferred Route was based on the Ministry's technical analysis using natural, land use, socio-economic, cultural, and transportation criteria and Regional staff were generally satisfied with the Technically Preferred Route.

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Notwithstanding, Regional staff identified a number of transportation, planning, infrastructure, and public health related implications of the Technically Preferred Route for the Region of Peel which were detailed in a report to Regional Council on October 24, 2019 and submitted to the Province as official Council endorsed comments (Resolution 2019-961).

On August 7, 2020, the Ministry confirmed the Preferred Route and 2020 Focused Analysis Area for the GTA West Transportation Corridor (see Appendix I). The Preferred Route is a refined version of the Technically Preferred Route based on public and stakeholder feedback, supersedes the Technically Preferred Route, and will be developed to a preliminary design level of detail over the next two years. The 2020 Focused Analysis Area is a zone surrounding the Preferred Route which may be impacted by the GTA West Transportation Corridor if refinements are made to the route during the preliminary design stage.

This report provides an overview of the Preferred Route and details the next steps in the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment Process.

2. Significance of the GTA West Transportation Corridor to the Region of Peel

The identification of the Preferred Route has been long awaited by Regional and local municipal staff as it provides greater certainty around the alignment of the corridor and will allow staff to advance comprehensive land use, development, and transportation planning in areas along the corridor.

Further, the expeditious completion of the environmental assessment and implementation of the corridor has also been a long-standing advocacy position for the Region of Peel. The Region of Peel is expected to grow by 500,000 residents and 250,000 jobs by 2041. In order to accommodate the future travel demand, the Region's Long Range Transportation Plan recommends a balanced approach which includes sustainable modes, focused road widenings, and the GTA West Transportation Corridor to alleviate demand on the Regional road network and help move people and goods. In addition, the Province has recently released new growth forecasts for the Region of Peel of 2.28 million people and 1.07 million jobs to 2051 which will result in additional travel demand on the Region's transportation network. Regional staff are currently evaluating the 2051 growth forecasts and will report to Council on the allocation and impact of this growth in due course. The corridor will also support the Region's future economic vitality by serving as a catalyst for growth and will enhance the Provincial freeway network within Peel.

Due in part by the Region's successful advocacy efforts, on June 8, 2020, the Province proposed a regulation to streamline the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) by eliminating duplication and shortening timelines. While Regional staff support, in principle, the Province's efforts to shorten the EA timelines, additional information on the specific changes to the current EA process is needed to fully understand the implications to Peel. Regional staff have requested additional details from the Province on how the streamlined process will differ from the existing process as detailed in Appendix II and will work with Ministry staff through the preliminary design stage to ensure environmental, agricultural, health, and infrastructure impacts are avoided, minimized, or mitigated.

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3. GTA West Transportation Corridor – Preferred Route

The Preferred Route for the GTA West Transportation Corridor differs from the Technically Preferred route in four areas, three of which are within the Region of Peel (Appendix I provides a visual map):

Change in route alignment and rationale provided by the Ministry of Transportation	Regional and Local Municipal Impacts
<p>1. In northwest Brampton, the route alignment shifted west from south of Wanless Drive to north of Mayfield Road to mitigate impacts to lands east of Heritage Road.</p>	<p>Regional and local municipal staff will be seeking further clarity from the Province on the impact of this change to Heritage Road, impacts to Regional infrastructure, and impacts to the City of Brampton’s Heritage Heights Secondary Planning Process which are also discussed later in this report.</p>
<p>2. In Caledon, the route alignment of the Highway 410 to GTA West Corridor connection was shifted west between Heart Lake Road and Dixie Road to mitigate impacts to the Mayfield West Secondary Plan Area.</p>	<p>Regional staff find this shift in route alignment to be satisfactory and will work with the Ministry to minimize impacts to Regional infrastructure which cross the Highway 410 to GTA West Corridor connection.</p>
<p>3. On the east side of Peel, the Coleraine Interchange shown on the Technically Preferred Route impacted lands outside of the study area which had proceeded to advanced stages of development. Consequently, the interchange was moved to Humber Station Road.</p> <p>The relocation of the Coleraine interchange to Humber Station Road also required a southerly shift of the route alignment between the Humber Station Road Interchange and the Highway 427 interchange.</p>	<p>Since the release of the Technically Preferred Route, Regional and local municipal staff have worked collaboratively to provide the Ministry with inputs to better understand the land use, transportation, and environmental constraints and complexities in the Coleraine interchange area, identifying mutually agreed upon objectives for the interchange (Resolution 2020-175), configuration, and geometry of the interchange.</p> <p>At the time the Preferred Route was announced, Regional staff were preparing a report to Council regarding Regional and local municipal staff comments on the Ministry’s options for the Coleraine interchange however a copy of the comments were also provided to the Ministry to be considered in the event that a decision is made prior to council endorsement of staff’s comments (See Appendix III).</p> <p>The relocation of the Coleraine Interchange to Humber Station Road was one of the two options preferred by Regional and local</p>

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Change in route alignment and rationale provided by the Ministry of Transportation	Regional and Local Municipal Impacts
	municipal staff. Notwithstanding, Regional staff will continue to work with the Ministry to identify, minimize, and mitigate impacts to the Regional and local road network.
4. In York Region, modifications were made to the route alignment between Highway 427 interchange and the Highway 27 interchange based on new information and stakeholder feedback.	Does not preclude the Region’s advocacy position regarding the further extension of Highway 427 to highway 9 and beyond.

4. Region of Peel Priority Areas for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment

In 2012, Regional Council endorsed three “priority areas” in the Region of Peel (Resolution 2012-923) where significant planning challenges had existed due to the uncertainty around the alignment of the GTA West Transportation Corridor: Mayfield West (Caledon), Heritage Heights (Brampton), and Secondary Plan Area 47 (Brampton). In addition to the three priority areas, the GTA West Transportation Corridor also impacts the Ninth Line lands which are the last planned greenfield area in the City of Mississauga. The confirmation of the Preferred Route and 2020 Focused Analysis Area provides greater certainty to land use, and transportation planning in these areas and reduces the impact to developable lands in the Region of Peel.

- **Mayfield West**

Through the Preferred Route, a direct freeway to freeway connection between the GTA West Transportation Corridor and Highway 410 was confirmed. Regional staff are supportive of this route alignment as it minimizes impacts to developments within the Mayfield West Secondary Plan. Notwithstanding, the route impacts the extension of the Victoria feedermain and Regional staff will work closely to coordinate with the Ministry to minimize these infrastructure impacts.

- **Heritage Heights**

Following the release of the Technically Preferred Route in September 2019, the City of Brampton hosted a series of virtual workshops throughout May and June of 2020. The virtual workshops included internal City staff, external commenting agencies, landowners and various other stakeholders to develop a concept plan for the Heritage Heights Secondary Plan Area. The concept plan seeks to replace the proposed 400-series highway for the GTA West Transportation Corridor with an urban boulevard running north-south within the limits of the Heritage Heights secondary plan area. Through this workshop, City staff concluded that an urban boulevard would provide the most effective north-south movement from an economic and community building perspective. Regional staff attended the workshops and provided a formal Regional comment letter on July 17,

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2020 to the City of Brampton which detailed a request for further clarification on a number of technical concerns including the urban boulevard proposal. A copy of the Region's formal comment letter is attached (See Appendix IV).

On July 27, 2020, the City of Brampton's Planning and Development Committee unanimously endorsed the Concept Plan and directed City staff to undertake the necessary technical studies required to support the concept plan. Correspondence has been received from various landowners within Heritage Heights in support of the urban boulevard concept and have been included in the October 22, 2020 Regional Council Meeting agenda as communication items.

City staff have initiated discussions with the Province and other stakeholder groups, including adjacent municipalities, on discussions associated with the urban boulevard concept in lieu of a highway concept for the GTA West Transportation Corridor within Heritage Heights and plan to delegate to Regional Council on October 22, 2020.

Currently, Regional Council has indicated support for the GTA West Transportation Corridor as per Resolution 2012-923. Further, it is the policy of Regional Council to require the City of Brampton ensure that its official plan, including all amendments and secondary plans, adhere to the following:

“That development of any subsequent phase of North West Brampton, beyond Phase 1, shall be permitted to proceed only if the development can be supported by the existing and planned arterial road network and transit system, inclusive of a North-South Transportation Corridor, and only after the alignment, jurisdiction and financing mechanism of a viable North-South Transportation Corridor has been determined to the Region's satisfaction such that the construction of a highway within the North-South Transportation Corridor will occur in time to meet traffic demands including traffic demands generated from subsequent phases of development.”

Based on the information received from City of Brampton staff to date, insufficient information is available to satisfy the Regional official plan policy framework at this time. However, Regional staff look forward to participating in further discussions and review of technical materials with City of Brampton staff, Provincial staff, and other stakeholders to better understand the feasibility and Regional implications of the urban boulevard concept.

While the Technically Preferred Route identified the corridor in Heritage Heights to be east of Heritage Road, the Preferred Route shifts the route alignment west overlapping Heritage Road from north of Mayfield Road to south of Wanless Drive to optimize developable land on the east side of Heritage Road. City of Brampton staff identified implications of this change to the Heritage Heights Secondary Planning work currently underway as it may impact the viability of Heritage Road, other roads, and active transportation infrastructure planned for the area and would also require some revisions to the proposed land use concept.

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Notwithstanding the detailed transportation implementation issues associated with the Boulevard concept that Region staff continue to explore, staff are supportive of the direction of Brampton's overall Heritage Heights community vision which aligns with many Regional objectives such as more efficient use of lands and infrastructure, maximizing employment potential, transit supportive density and design, more walkable, healthy and complete communities.

- **Secondary Plan Area 47 and Humber Station Road Interchange**

The relocation of the Coleraine Interchange to Humber Station Road and the corresponding shift of the route alignment slightly further south into Secondary Plan Area 47 may result in the following:

- The Preferred Route alignment requires an additional nine hectares of land in the City of Brampton as compared to the Technically Preferred Route alignment
- The route alignment may impact the location of the future intersection of Arterial Road A2 and Mayfield Road
- The relocation of the interchange to Humber Station Road may generate higher traffic volumes along Clarkway Drive than previously anticipated and the current Block Plan for the lands in this area calls for Clarkway Drive to remain at two lanes with a rural cross-section
- The relocation of the interchange to Humber Station Road may also require a realignment of the Mayfield Road and Humber Station Road/Clarkway Drive intersection which is currently an offset intersection

The Ministry has been informed of the above and has committed to working with Regional and local municipal staff to address them through the detailed design process.

- **Lands in the City of Mississauga and the GTA West Transportation Corridor/Highway 401/Highway 407 Interchange**

In addition to the three priority areas endorsed by Regional Council, the GTA West Transportation Corridor/Highway 401/Highway 407 interchange impacts City of Mississauga owned lands for park and community services uses on the west side of Ninth Line and lands on the south side of Highway 401 designated for employment uses. Regional and local municipal staff are working with the Ministry to minimize impacts to developable lands in this area and have advocated to the Province to consider the GTA West Transportation Corridor in the current Highway 401 Expansion Project to minimize future construction and infrastructure impacts (see Appendix V; Resolution 2019-961).

5. Preliminary and Detailed Design Considerations

The confirmation of the Preferred Route for the GTA West Transportation Corridor EA brings the study into the next step of the process. Over the next two years, the Ministry will complete field investigations, collect technical information, undertake a traffic analysis and will be developing the Preferred Route to a preliminary design level of detail.

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Through official comments on the Technically Preferred Route provided in October 2019, Regional staff identified a number of key impacts that should be assessed in the preliminary design stage of the Environmental Assessment including the need for a Traffic Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Agricultural Impact Assessment, and Environmental Evaluations as detailed in Appendix VI.

6. Coordination Required through Preliminary Design

The preliminary design stage of the environmental assessment will require significant coordination between the Region of Peel and the Province in terms of minimizing and mitigating infrastructure impacts including impacts to the Region's existing and planned water and wastewater network, transportation network, and public sector network.

- **Water and Wastewater Impacts:**

Based on Regional staff's preliminary analysis approximately \$0.5 billion worth of existing and proposed water and wastewater assets are impacted by the Preferred Route for the GTA West Transportation Corridor. Impacts to these assets could pose large service disruptions to businesses and residents of Peel and could carry high costs for relocation.

Regional staff will continue to be a key stakeholder during the preliminary design, detailed design, and construction phases of the project to coordinate existing and future works and relocations. Furthermore, Regional projects that are currently in the design/construction stage, will require direction from the GTA West Corridor team regarding the depth/alignment of these assets so that future relocation/impact is avoided.

Lastly, as the study advances, Regional staff will continue to engage in discussions with the Ministry regarding an agreement to cover costs associated with potential relocation due to impact of the GTA West Corridor route.

- **Transportation Impacts:**

The Region of Peel has a number of ongoing and planned transportation capital projects impacted by the GTA West Transportation Corridor. The Region will face challenges in completing detailed design of these projects due to uncertainty surrounding the future corridor design.

Regional staff have raised this issue with the Ministry and, where possible, project timelines have been coordinated to minimize throwaway costs. Regional staff have also requested that the province prioritize detailed design of the corridor in these areas.

- **Public Sector Network Impacts:**

Similar to transportation and water/wastewater infrastructure, the GTA West Transportation Corridor also impacts the Region's Public Sector Network which is comprised of high efficiency telecommunications lines that carry data and critical communications including emergency services, between municipal facilities across the

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City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, and Town of Caledon, as well as other public sector agencies operating within Peel.

Given that the depth of this telecommunications utility is quite shallow and based on Regional staff's preliminary analysis, substantial impacts to the Region's Public Sector Network are anticipated and as such, close coordination will be required on this matter through the preliminary design, detailed design, and construction phases of the project.

CONCLUSION

Regional staff are generally satisfied with the Preferred Route for the GTA West Transportation Corridor; support, in principle, the Province's efforts to shorten the environmental assessment timelines; and acknowledge the Province's efforts in working collaboratively with Regional and local municipal staff to resolve the issues identified with the Technically Preferred Route.

Regional staff look forward to closely working with Provincial staff through the preliminary design phase of the environmental assessment which is expected to conclude in Winter 2022. Staff will continue to update Regional Council at key project milestones.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Preferred Route and 2020 Focused Analysis Area

Appendix II - Regional Staff Letter - Proposed Regulation to Streamline the GTA West Environmental Assessment

Appendix III - Regional Staff Letter - GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment - Coleraine Drive Interchange

Appendix IV - Regional Staff Letter - Brampton Heritage Heights Concept Plan

Appendix V – Regional Chair Iannicca's Letter to Province - GTA West-Highway 401 Coordination

Appendix VI – Considerations for Preliminary and Detailed Design

For further information regarding this report, please contact Tina Detaramani, Manager, Sustainable Transportation & Strategic Initiatives, Ext. 4420, Tina.Detaramani@peelregion.ca.

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Department Commissioner, Division Director, Financial Support Unit and Legal Services.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



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