

## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, November 12, 2019

**WARD(S):** 1

**TITLE: GTA WEST TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR ROUTE PLANNING  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) STUDY RESUMPTION**

**FROM:**

Nick Spensieri, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

This report is intended to supplement the presentation from the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) Project Team on the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, which provides background information on the study, an update on the recent study resumption, and highlights of the Technically Preferred Alternative.

In addition, the purpose of this report is to secure Council's approval of the recommendations included in this report.

**Report Highlights**

- The GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study has resumed from its cancellation in 2018;
- The second round of Public Information Centers (PICs) for this study began on September 19, 2019;
- The PICs included the Technically Preferred and the reduced Focused Analysis Area, showing lands that will be made available for development, subject to confirmation of the Preferred Alternative;
- Staff have made recommendations for approval regarding the Technically Preferred Alternative, mostly speaking to connectivity, impacts to the significant environmental features, and impacts to the City's land use and economic competitiveness;
- The GTA West Project team will be presenting to Regional Council on November 14, 2019;
- The GTA West EA Study scheduled for completion in 2022, has strong support for its resumption and completion.

## **Recommendations**

1. That the presentation from the Ministry of Transportation with respect to the GTA West Corridor Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study be received;
2. That the Ministry of Transportation be requested to work with the City of Vaughan in the confirmation of the preferred alternative, interchanges and ultimate alignment, and to address the issues identified in this report, while prioritizing the following key objectives:
  - 1) Minimize impacts to the developable residential and employment land base, agricultural viability and economic competitiveness
  - 2) Comprehensive mitigation of potential impacts on environmental and cultural heritage features
  - 3) Connectivity of the local transportation network to the highway network
  - 4) Connectivity of the local transportation network across the GTA West corridor
3. That the Ministry of Transportation be requested to provide a written response to the City of Vaughan's comments prior to confirming the Preferred Alternative; and
4. That a copy of this report be forwarded to the Province, the Ministry of Transportation, the City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, Township of King, Region of Peel and Region of York.

## **Background**

### **The GTA West Transportation Corridor is Required**

The GTA West Corridor which spans from Highway 400 in the east to the Highway 401 / 407 ETR interchange in the west, is identified in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area as part of the required transportation improvements to support the planning vision for managing growth and development. The updated 2019 Growth Plan forecasts the area to grow to 13.5million people and 6.3million jobs by 2041.

Under the Growth Plan policy framework, the GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study is designed to explore all modes of transportation options for facilitating more efficient movement of people and goods and protecting the required land. Even with improving the existing transportation network, widening existing highways, and the transit expansion projects identified in the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan, additional road capacity is still required.

The GTA West Transportation Corridor will help address current transportation issues, provide opportunities, and result in benefits for adjacent communities. Without the Corridor, Region of York and the City's transportation infrastructure will experience further reduction in level of service. The absence of the Corridor will also impact the Province's

mandated ongoing employment and population growth planning to 2041.

### **GTA West EA Study Process commenced in 2007**

The GTA West EA consists of two stages. In 2007, MTO initiated Stage 1. 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.

The MTO initiated Stage 2 of the GTA West EA in early 2014. Building on recommendations from Stage 1, three route alternatives for the new transportation corridor were generated within the Route Planning Study Area as part of Stage 2.

In addition to examining alternative routes for the new transportation corridor and a transitway, the Project Team examined alternatives for interchanges, bridges, crossing road treatments, truck priority features, and other key elements of the corridor. The new corridor would include a 400-series 4-to-6-lane highway with freeway-to-freeway connections at Highway 401/407ETR, Highway 410, Highway 427, and Highway 400. The right-of-way would range between 110m (highway) without the transitway and 170m including a separate adjacent transitway.

### **MTO has undertaken a rigorous consultation plan throughout the Project**

Creative approaches were used to maximize the outreach and engagement of stakeholders. Several advisory groups were formed to support the study, many of which were involved during Stage 1 of the study, and continued to be involved during Stage 2:

- The Community Advisory Group (CAG)
- The Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group (GTAG)
- The Municipal Advisory Group (MAG)
- The Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG)
- The Municipal Executive Advisory Group (MEAG)

A Municipal Advisory Group (MAG) was formed in Stage 1 to consult and seek technical input from municipalities and agencies at key stages of the GTA West EA. The Group continued to be involved during Stage 2. City staff will continue to participate as a member of the Municipal Advisory Group throughout this study. It is anticipated that the next MAG meeting will be held in Fall 2019.

The first round of Public Information Centers (PICs) in connection with Stage 2 were held in November and December 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) was presented as a zone surrounding the short list of route alternatives for protection of those lands. The short list of alternatives are illustrated in Attachment No.1.

Following stakeholders' feedback on PIC#1, the Project Team planned to review and respond to comments, then further evaluate the short list of route alternatives. 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 Technically Preferred Alternative was planned to be presented at PIC#2 in Fall/Winter 2015. The Study was scheduled to be finalized in May 2018.

### **The GTA West EA Study was suspended on February 9, 2018**

On December 16, 2015, the Minister of Transportation issued a media bulletin announcing the suspension of the GTA West EA pending project review, with an update to be provided in Spring 2016.

In 2016, to facilitate the review of the GTA West EA, an advisory panel was appointed by the Minister. The panel's mandate was to conduct a strategic assessment of the studies, make recommendations on the next steps, and give advice on a path forward for the GTA West EA process. The Advisory Panel report was released on February 9, 2018 and the Minister announced that the province would not proceed with the GTA West EA study.

### **The GTA West EA Study resumed on June 19, 2019**

On June 19, 2019, the Provincial Government announced that the EA for the GTA West Corridor will be resumed from its point of suspension in 2015.

The second round of PICs for the GTA West EA study began on September 19, 2019 at Château Le Jardin Conference Centre in Woodbridge. The purpose of the PIC was to present the study process, the Technically Preferred Alternative, a refined 2019 Focused Analysis Area (FAA) and to provide an opportunity to participate in a Community Value Plans Group for the Study. City staff were in attendance. Attachment No. 2 shows the Technically Preferred Alternative Route and the rationale for the preferred interchange

locations and Attachment No. 3 shows the 2019 and 2014 FAAs showing lands that may become available for development, subject to the confirmation of the Preferred Alternative.

The study has a planned completion in late 2022, including Preliminary Design, a third PIC in late 2021 and final submission of the Environmental Assessment Report.

Additional information and PIC panels have been made available at this link:  
<https://www.gta-west.com/consultation/public-information-centres-and-community-workshops/>

Two other PICs with the same information took place on September 26, 2019 in Georgetown and October 3, 2019 in Caledon. The GTA West Project Team requested comments by October 31, 2019.

### **The Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Identification Study will be undertaken as a separate study from the GTA West EA Study**

In February 2018, MTO and the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), with support from the Ministry of Energy, initiated The Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study to identify and protect lands for a multipurpose linear infrastructure corridor.

With the resumption of the GTA West EA Study, The Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study is not proceeding; however, in June 2019, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines (ENDM) and the IESO initiated The Northwest GTA 'Transmission' Corridor Identification Study, which is a new study separate from the GTA West EA. The Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Identification Study was initiated to identify a transmission corridor (almost adjacent to the GTA West EA corridor, see Attachment No. 4) to be protected for future transmission infrastructure to support growing demand for electricity in the western GTA.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2015

[https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes\\_agendas/AgendaItems/Priorities0310\\_15\\_1.pdf](https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/Priorities0310_15_1.pdf)

Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of April 21, 2015

[https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes\\_agendas/AgendaItems/CW0414\\_15\\_38.pdf](https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/CW0414_15_38.pdf)

Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of April 19, 2016

[https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes\\_agendas/AgendaItems/CW0405\\_16\\_23.pdf](https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/CW0405_16_23.pdf)

## **Analysis and Options**

A comprehensive analysis of technical and environmental elements was undertaken by the GTA West Project Team in consultation with the public, stakeholders, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and government agencies to identify the Technically Preferred Alternative for the new transportation corridor.

City staff have reviewed the information provided at PIC#2 (especially for the sections of the corridor that fall within Vaughan - Sections 7, 8 and 9) and also reviewed recommendations that were previously made (before the 2015 suspension) for the short-list of route alternatives. The following discusses the previous recommendations and provides additional recommendations for approval:

### **Minimize Impacts on the Developable Residential and Employment Land Base, Agricultural Viability and Economic Competitiveness**

The GTA West EA Study should consider the implications for strategically significant employment lands for Goods Movement functions, while protecting existing and future community areas to fulfill regional population and employment growth targets and sustain economic competitiveness.

The City of Vaughan is the largest employment center within York Region. With 39% of the Region's total surveyed employment in 2018, Vaughan is home to 12,000 businesses employing more than 222,000 people. Future projections anticipate that Vaughan's employment will grow to 321,500 by 2041. Similarly, population is expected to grow to almost half a million people by 2041, from the current 330,000 population. Vaughan's strategic location, robust local economy, and desirability as a community, lends itself to strong growth-related pressures impacting demand for employment land, residential opportunities, and goods and people movement to get to and from daily activities.

Based on the findings of the Economic Development and Employment Sectors Study (2019), and York Region's Planning for Employment Background Report, non-office employment growth is projected to substantially occur in the West Vaughan Employment Areas, as one of the largest freight and logistics clusters in the GTA. Future demand for employment areas is anticipated to remain strong and be driven by land-extensive logistics and warehouse facilities as the role of e-commerce in the Canadian economy continues to expand. Protecting for future employment opportunities and leveraging the multimodal goods movement system which are in close proximity, almost one-half of Vaughan's vacant land supply (i.e. 504 hectares out of 1,041 hectares) lies within two (2) kilometers (see Table 1) of the GTA West Corridor. Shovel-ready sites within the Highway 427 areas account for 75% of Vaughan's employment land supply.

**Table 1: Employment Areas Within Two (2) km of the GTA West Corridor**

<b>Employment Area</b>	<b>Vacant Land (Net Hectares)</b>
Highway 400 North – Northeast (Block 35E)	122
Highway 400 North – Northwest (Block 35W)	81
Highway 400 North – Teston East (Block 34E)	109
Highway 400 North – Teston West (Block 34W)	17
West Vaughan – Elder Mills (Block 60)	116
West Vaughan – Nashville (Block 66W)	59

*Source: York Region, 2017 Vacant Employment Land Inventory*

The proposed GTA West Corridor also lies in close proximity to emerging community areas that serve as the homes and neighborhoods for a growing population and employment base. Areas such as Kleinburg/Nashville and Block 41 that serve as the residential communities for workers living and working across the broader GTA region; require protection from conflicts with future highway operations.

Careful consideration needs to be given to how the proposed highway contributes to positive outcomes, such as: economic growth, employment opportunities and sustainability as embodied in the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan objectives:

- City Building
- Transportation and Mobility;
- Environmental Stewardship; and
- Economic Prosperity, Investment and Social Capital.

In order to achieve the City’s strategic vision, an alignment (including access opportunities and preservation of the land base) that maximizes industrial-commercial land-uses, related jobs and tax assessment, must be a top strategic priority of the City of Vaughan.

**Ensure alignment of the GTA West, emerging official plan policies and land use**

The northwest quadrant of the City, west of Highway 400, is characterized by a complex combination of land use regulations, topography, existing and planned development and existing and planned infrastructure, which make long-term community planning challenging. York Region is currently undertaking its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), which allocates new population and employment growth to Vaughan to the year 2041. Based on the outcome of the MCR and resulting amendment to the York Region Official Plan, some of the land adjacent to the routing alternatives may be required to

accommodate such growth. The overlay of the GTA West Corridor onto this geography will introduce a new consideration, which will need to be managed.

The Technically Preferred Alternative passes through the Huntington Road Community (east side of Huntington Road and north of Nashville Road), an area approved for residential development in the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan. Should these lands be lost to residential development, the residential units provided therein will have to be accommodated elsewhere within the City to fulfill the 2031 population allocation. Similarly, the Technically Preferred Alternative for the GTA West Corridor and the Highway 427 Extension also impact parts of the West Vaughan Employment Area Secondary Plan (Block 66 W). Impacts on the developable land base in these areas must be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

**Fragmentation of employment sites, creation of land-locked parcels, and access constraints diminish the attractiveness of Vaughan's employment areas for future manufacturing, supply chain (transportation and logistics), and headquarters uses**

The existing infrastructure northwest of Kleinburg also presents challenges. The Hydro Corridor and transformer station, the CP Rail Line and the existing arterial road network, with the potential overlay of a 400-series Highway and interchanges, will create a very complex network of transportation infrastructure. The impact will be exacerbated as the highway, rail network and Regional/Local networks will need to be grade separated from each other. This has the potential to cause isolated parcels of development land, with access restrictions resulting from the placement of structures. The access to and usability of the remnant parcels will need to be considered carefully. The area's proximity to the CP Rail Yard makes this a potentially strategic opportunity for employment uses, which should be acknowledged and preserved through this process.

An estimated 33.7 hectares of employment land in the Nashville (West Vaughan) Employment Area is directly impacted by the proposed highway alignment, and this figure is likely to increase with additional lands being compromised because of access issues and setbacks from both highway and hydro corridors. In bisecting Block 35 at the eastern highway terminus, the estimated impact in the Highway 400 North Employment Areas is approximately 23.5 hectares.

The route also passes through the "Whitebelt" area (the agricultural area between Settlement Areas and the Greenbelt Plan Area in the Growth Plan) where any required future urban expansion may be accommodated, based on the outcome of the York Region MCR. The presence of the route in that area may limit the land use options



available to the City, in that it makes it less likely that residential development may occur adjacent to what will ultimately be a 400-series highway.

The corridor also contains prime agricultural lands within the “Whitebelt” and Greenbelt Plan area. Fifteen percent of Vaughan land is in the Greenbelt which is approximately 4,109 hectares and approximately 3,069 hectares is farmland. The proposed alignment will significantly fragment these remaining agricultural lands in Vaughan. Mitigation measures to limit fragmentation is strongly needed.

The 2018 Active Together Master Plan has identified a need for a future Regional Park in the north-west quadrant of the City. As this future location may be impacted by the Technically Preferred Alternative, through the development of the GTA West alignment and associated EA consultation, the City will seek to identify potential opportunities suitable for a future regional park.

### **Comprehensive Mitigation of Environmental and Cultural Heritage Features**

From an environmental perspective, the study area forms part of the headwaters of the Humber River, which includes reaches of cold-water streams and sensitive habitats. The Humber Valley system is comprised primarily of the Core Features that make up the City’s Natural Heritage Network and protected in accordance with the City of Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010). There are also lands within the study area proceeding through or already designated under the Federal government ‘Ecological Gifts’ program.

The Toronto and Region Assessment Report and the Central Lake Ontario, Toronto Region and Credit Valley Source Protection Plan took effect on December 31, 2015, as mandated by the Clean Water Act, 2006. The study area is within or in proximity to the Kleinburg Wellhead Protection Area, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers, Recharge Management Areas (known as “Wellhead Protection Area - Quantity” (WHPA-Q)), and Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas which are regulated by the Plan.

The City of Vaughan’s GIS mapping for archaeological sites and archaeological potential indicates that the Technically Preferred Alternative has significant potential to impact previously identified sites and is located through an area identified as having significant archaeological potential.

The City’s Cultural Heritage staff have reviewed the study area and the Technically Preferred Alternative and determined that it has the potential to impact up to 33 properties with known or believed cultural heritage resources.

Minimizing the negative impacts on the above noted environmental and cultural heritage features, will be required through appropriate design. Comprehensive mitigation measures and habitat compensation will be essential to maintain overall habitat quality and the ecosystem services provided by the environmental features.

### **Connectivity of Local Transportation Network to the Highway Network**

On March 31, 2015, a meeting was held between the City, York Region, Township of King and MTO staff to discuss interchanges and crossing road opportunities for the GTA West Corridor. At the meeting, refinements to route alternatives and location of proposed interchange locations were discussed including the following resolution that was adopted by Council at its meeting of June 28, 2011:

*“That the Ministry of Transportation be requested to integrate the provisions of at least one full interchange with Highway 400 to service the 400 North Employment Area Secondary Plan (OPA 637) area together with a Regional arterial in conjunction with Stage 2 of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment Study.”*

It was initially anticipated that this new interchange would be located at King-Vaughan Road and Highway 400. It was later recognized that while originally screened out from further consideration, the potential for an interchange at Weston Road should not be prematurely dismissed without fully exploring the impacts in realizing and servicing the 400 North Employment Secondary Plan Area. The GTA West team concurred with the City’s comments and evaluated the potential for a partial interchange at Weston Road. York Region has identified an arterial road requirement in the Council endorsed Regional Transportation Master Plan that would provide for eastbound traffic travelling on the GTA West Corridor to continue eastbound to Bathurst Street. This is founded on policy statements in the 2010 Regional Official Plan. These policies were further advanced through the Mid-York East-West Transportation Corridor Study completed in 2012. Proceeding with a single EA for Mid-York east-west transportation improvements is also contingent on having a recommended configuration for the GTA West – Highway 400 Interchange.

**The number and location of highway interchanges matter. For the entirety of the GTA West’s expanse through Vaughan, one partial and one full movement interchange are hardly sufficient to support the City’s employment lands**

One full interchange at Highway 27 and one partial interchange at Weston Road are proposed in the current configuration of the GTA West corridor. The lack of new full interchanges increases the burden on existing and/or planned interchanges, as well as

arterial roads. In order to improve the connectivity of the Highway to the City of Vaughan, there should be consideration for at least one additional full or partial-service interchange within the City of Vaughan.

City of Vaughan's Official Plan Schedule 9: Future Road Network identifies an interchange at Highway 400 and King-Vaughan Road. Planned interchanges at Highway 400 and King-Vaughan and Kirby Road will likely be precluded by the Technically Preferred Alternative. It is unclear how effectively the City's employment lands can be supported without convenient access to the highway. This could result in a situation, where the burden of the infrastructure is borne by the City; however, the major benefits accrue elsewhere due to lack of convenient access.

**The Toronto Board of Trade estimates loss of productivity from road congestion costs the Toronto Region \$6 billion annually and is estimated to rise to \$15 billion by 2031. Addressing the needs of large trip generators such as the CP Intermodal Terminal, Home Depot and other national logistics companies with accessible and connected highway infrastructure reduces traffic infiltration to otherwise congested areas; promotes business and operational efficiencies; and enables staff recruitment and retention**

The Technically Preferred Alternative does not include a direct connection from the Highway 427 Northbound Off Ramp with Huntington. The lack of connection is highly noticeable for employment areas that form part of the largest transportation and logistics clusters in the GTA, which includes the largest intermodal facility in CP's national network, the Home Depot's Rapid Deployment Centre, DHL/Ikea, etc. – all 24/7 operations that service the southern Ontario, Quebec and Maritimes markets with consumer and household goods, food and materials. The inclusion of this connection is recommended to provide better connectivity and minimize unnecessary cut-through traffic in neighbouring residential block(s). Note, the City is currently working with the Block 60 East and West landowners group to include and evaluate this connection, at the minimum, as part of the various traffic analysis options.

Considerations should be made for a mid-block connectivity with the interchanges at Weston Road and Highway 400 (as recommended by the North Vaughan and New Communities Transportation Master Plan 2019) which would improve accessibility for Block 35 traffic, especially with additional traffic that may be "bottlenecking" along King-Vaughan Road and Kirby Road while getting to Highway 400 and future GTA West.

Carpool lots are recommended along the GTA West corridor where appropriate, especially at key junctions such as at Highway 427 and Highway 400.

**Connectivity of Local Transportation Network Across the GTA West Corridor**

Highways pose a significant barrier for those trying to connect to areas on either side of the highway when appropriate crossing and infrastructure is not provided especially for those walking or cycling. As such the following comments are being provided for consideration:

- Regular crossings for Active Transportation should be provided regardless of whether or not a roadway crossing for automobiles is provided to allow for active transportation connections between neighborhoods and surrounding municipalities.
- For every interchange and roadway crossing of the GTA West project, separated cycling and pedestrian infrastructure on both sides of the bridge should be integrated regardless of if facilities exist on approaching roadways in support of the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.
- Underpass trail crossings within creek and valley corridors should be integrated into the design and implementation of the GTA West project as per the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan in support of City -wide multi-use recreational trail network and Vaughan Super Trail initiative, the TRCA Trails Strategy and to allow for trail connections into surrounding municipalities such as Brampton, Caledon and King Township. Crossings shall meet the City's design parameters for minimum clearance, widths, material, grades and construction methods.

The Highway 427 and GTA West system interchange will disconnect Highway 50, Countryside Drive, Nashville Road and Cold Creek Road including the intersections of Highway 50 and Countryside Drive/Nashville Road and Nashville Road /Cold Creek Road in the west end of Vaughan. The impact of these road severances on the connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods should be reviewed with potential mitigations identified.

It is recognized that there are broader transportation benefits accruing to the GTA as a result of the GTA West Corridor. However, there may be impacts on the long-term evolution of the City's urban structure and environmental quality. At this point in the process, the Ministry should be apprised of the City's concerns in regard to these matters. As the study proceeds, these and other potential impacts will need to be further investigated and mitigation measures identified. Given the number of major transportation infrastructure investments recently identified by the Provincial government, such as the Bradford Bypass, and the significant impacts identified within this report, the MTO may want to consider an alignment North of the current study area and along an existing arterial road.

## **Financial Impact**

There are no immediate economic impacts associated with this report.

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

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 transportation corridor 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 Centers in the GTA West Route Planning Study Area. The GTA West Corridor has been considered in both the Region and City's Transportation Master Plans and takes into consideration other transportation plans such as Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Region of York Viva, GO 2020 and Brampton Züm.

Staff from the Regions of York and Peel, the Township of King, the City of Brampton, and the Town of Caledon are actively participating in the GTA West Corridor EA and have been attending the Municipal Advisory Group meetings. Other organizations are also able to participate in the study through the Community Advisory Group (CAG), Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group (GTAG) and the Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG).

The Project Team last presented the Stage 2 progress update of the GTA West Corridor Transportation Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study to the Regional Committee of the Whole on March 5, 2015. It is anticipated that another presentation scheduled for November 14, 2019 will provide information on the study resumption and selection of the Technically Preferred Route Alternative to Regional Council.

## **Conclusion**

The 400-series highways in Ontario are vital economic corridors, pivotal to the movement of people and goods to domestic and international markets and therefore our local, provincial and national economies. As they traverse through urban areas, the 400-series highways play a double role as a central part of the urban road network, connecting people to jobs, businesses to suppliers and markets, and contributing to the flows of commerce between places. Goods Movement contributes \$231 billion in GDP to the provincial economy, representing more than one-fifth of overall GDP. The development and construction of highway networks serves as a catalyst for economic development enhancing local competitiveness and opportunities.

The City of Vaughan recognizes the need for and importance of the GTA West as a bypass to the traffic congestion of Highway 401 in the Toronto Region, deemed the

busiest stretch of freeway anywhere in North America by the US Department of Transportation. Moreover, the GTA West leverages the investments that have been made in multimodal transportation infrastructure including the Highway 427 extension and transitway currently under construction, the CP Intermodal Terminal, Pearson International Airport and the widening of Highway 400, to open up new employment areas and service communities in Vaughan and the broader region.

MTO's GTA West EA has resumed and Stage 2 of the project is well underway. The second round of PICs for the GTA West EA study began on September 19, 2019 at Château Le Jardin Conference Centre in Woodbridge. The purpose of the PIC was to present the study process, the Technically Preferred Alternative, and a refined 2019 Focused Analysis Area showing a reduction in width from the 2014 FAA. The study has a planned completion in late 2022, including Preliminary Design, a third PIC in late 2021 and final submission of the Environmental Assessment Report.

Staff have identified the following major issues that should be addressed through the study process:

- 1) Minimize impacts to the developable residential and employment land base, agricultural viability and economic competitiveness
- 2) Comprehensive mitigation of environmental and cultural heritage features
- 3) Connectivity of local transportation network to the highway network
- 4) Connectivity of local transportation network across the GTA West corridor

The GTA West Project Team requested comments by October 31, 2019. The recommendations outlined in this report will form the official response from the City upon approval from City Council.

The GTA West Project Team plan to complete a number of council presentations over the next while (including York Regional Council on November 14, 2019) and hold meetings with stakeholders, including the Advisory Groups. They will then review and confirm the Preferred Alternative based on feedback received.

Staff will continue to participate as a member of the Municipal Advisory Group throughout the study and will provide updates to Council at key milestones in the process.

With regards to the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Identification Study, City staff plan to review and provide comments on this study once more information is made available. An update will be provided to Council at a future Committee Meeting.

**For more information**, please contact Vince Musacchio at extension 8311.

## **Attachments**

1. Short List of Route Alternatives
2. Technically Preferred Alternative and Preferred Interchange Locations, MTO/AECOM/WSP, September 19, 2019
3. 2019 Focused Analysis Area, MTO/AECOM/WSP, September 19, 2019
4. Proposed Transmission Narrowed Area of Interest Compared to MTO's 2019 FAA, Ministry of Energy Northern Development and Mines (ENDM) and the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), September 2019

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