



REPORT

REPORT TO: Chair and Members of the Planning, Public Works and Transportation Committee

REPORT FROM: Bronwyn Parker, Manager of Planning Policy

DATE: October 19, 2019

REPORT NO.: PLS-2019-0074

RE: GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PLS-2019-0074, dated October 19, 2019, with respect to the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment Update, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Town staff continue to evaluate the impacts of the Technically Preferred Route for the GTA West Corridor located within the draft Focused Analysis Area (FAA) introduced by the Ministry of Transportation on September 19, 2019 and report back to Council regarding any new information related to the GTA West Environmental Assessment and potential impacts within the Town of Halton Hills;

AND FURTHER THAT the Region of Halton be requested to expedite the resolution of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 43 regarding Corridor Protection policies and related mapping in the Halton Region Official Plan at the earliest possible date once the GTA West Corridor Technically Preferred Route is confirmed in the spring of 2020;

AND FURTHER THAT Town staff be directed to develop a work plan that would initiate and expedite the resolution of Official Plan Amendment No. 21 to refine Corridor Protection policies and related mapping in the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan once the GTA West Corridor Technically Preferred Route is confirmed in the spring of 2020, and report back to Council with the said work plan;

AND FURTHER THAT the Region of Halton be requested to reconfirm its commitment to service the Halton Hills Premier Gateway Employment Area lands as previously stated in report CS-33-11/PW-53-11/LPS58-11 re: "2011 Water and Wastewater Servicing to Employment Lands in Halton";

AND FURTHER THAT the Region of Halton consider the comments set out in this report when Deferred Report No. LPS115-19/PW-48-19 (Comments on GTA West Public Information Centre # 2) is brought back to Regional Council;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town Clerk forward a copy of Report PLS-2019-0074 to the GTA West Project Team as the Town's formal comments on the draft Technically Preferred Route;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Town of Milton, the City of Brampton, the Regional Municipality of Halton, and the Regional Municipality of Peel for their information.

BACKGROUND:

As was identified through report PLS-2019-0056, in 2007, the GTA West Environmental Assessment (EA) Study was initiated by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to plan for future infrastructure needs and consider options to provide better movement of people and goods throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe to the year 2031.

In 2015 during Stage 2 of the GTA West EA, a Focused Analysis Area (FAA) was released. The 2015 FAA map is attached to this report as Appendix 1. The purpose of the FAA was to identify properties within the overall study area which may be directly impacted by the future transportation corridor (as demonstrated by the orange colour), as well as properties for which it was anticipated that the development process could proceed (those properties within the green colour).

While the MTO information explained that the properties included within the green areas of the FAA may proceed for development purposes, any lands which are included within the Region of Halton and Town of Halton Hills' Corridor Protection Areas (which includes the FAA green areas) remain restricted from development until such time as the Region and Town are able to refine or remove the Corridor Protection policies and related mapping from our Official Plans.

Shortly after the FAA map was released in 2015, the project was suspended.

Focused Analysis Area (2019)

On June 19, 2019 the Ministry of Transportation announced that the GTA West EA Study was once again resumed.

Since the announcement that the EA has been resumed, the Province has presented an updated Focused Analysis Area (FAA), attached to this report as Appendix 2. The MTO has also indicated that they have reduced interest in lands outside the FAA and that once the Technically Preferred Route (TPR) is confirmed in the spring of 2020, those lands within the green area of the 2019 FAA can be released for development. The MTO has confirmed that they will continue to review development applications in this area, but they anticipate that there will not be any restrictions to development of those lands.

Public Information Centres

Town staff attended the Public Information Centre (PIC) hosted by the GTA West Project Team on September 19, 2019 in Vaughan and the PIC on September 26, 2019 at the Gellert Centre in the Town of Halton Hills.

The PICs provided an opportunity for the public to view the work that has been completed to date, as well as presented the Technically Preferred Route and 2019 Focussed Analysis Area.

Attendees were also provided the opportunity to participate in the development of Community Value Plans and apply to be a representative on the Community Advisory Group and Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group, as well as to submit any comments they had regarding the GTA West EA via written submissions at the PICs.

The PICs were structured as informal drop-in sessions, with members of the GTA West Project Team and staff from MTO present to answer questions and assist where possible.

The project timeframe was also presented identifying that the Technically Preferred Route is expected to be confirmed in spring 2020 with the final EA being submitted to the Minister for approval in late 2022. A copy of the GTA West project timeframe is attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

COMMENTS:

Analysis of the Technically Preferred Route (TPR)

The draft Technically Preferred Route (attached as Appendices 3A and 3B) proposes an interchange at Winston Churchill Boulevard just south of 5 Sideroad at the boundary of the Town of Halton Hills and City of Brampton. The TPR then continues south westerly towards Ninth Line until it reaches Steeles Avenue. A second interchange is proposed at the Hwy 401/407ETR interchange, east of Trafalgar Road and Toronto Premium Outlets, south of Steeles Avenue.

In total, two interchanges are being proposed in the Town of Halton Hills.

Land Use Planning and Economic Development Considerations:

As discussed in PLS-2019-0053, the Town's Premier Gateway Employment Area enjoys a strategic location in the GTA with convenient access to Highways 401 and 407ETR, proximity to major shipping hubs, and easy access to the GTA and US markets.

Halton Hills' economic prosperity is heavily dependent on the timely and efficient development of the Premier Gateway Employment Area. Approximately 90% of future employment growth projected for Halton Hills is anticipated to occur in the Premier Gateway. Continued investment and job growth in the Gateway will make a considerable contribution to Halton Hills' economy and by extension support economic growth across the GTA and beyond.

The Premier Gateway is already home to millions of square feet of industrial and commercial development, occupied by numerous companies. Vacancy rates are very low, with demand for space significantly outpacing supply.

As Committee may recall, the eastern portion of the Premier Gateway is subject to HPBATS/GTA West Corridor Protection policies set out in ROPA No. 43 and OPA No. 21. ROPA No. 43 remains under appeal at LPAT. OPA No. 21 is being held in abeyance by Halton Region at the request of Town Council.

From a land use planning perspective, the proposed Technically Preferred Route for GTA West lessens the total area of land impacted for the Premier Gateway Employment lands within the Town of Halton Hills. Understanding that the refined Focussed Analysis Area is approximately 250 m wide and the Technically Preferred Route approximately 170 m wide, provides some confirmation of the potential property impacts throughout the Corridor Protection area and provides an opportunity to initiate planning exercises to allow development in the Premier Gateway Phase 2B Employment lands located north of Steeles Avenue, between Eighth Line and Winston Churchill Boulevard. The proposed Secondary Plan and Scoped Subwatershed Study process related to the Premier Gateway Phase 2B Employment lands is provided via report PLS-2019-0044.

As such, it is imperative that the GTA West EA Study be completed in a timely manner. This, in turn, will enable the Town and Region to expeditiously refine the ROPA 43 and OPA 21 corridor protection policies and mapping to enable development to proceed, including the Premier Gateway Phase 2B Secondary Plan area.

Even after the GTA West Technically Preferred Route is confirmed, there will still be impacts to the Town's overall employment land budget within the Phase 2B Employment Area. The Town expects and is seeking confirmation from the Region that we will be maintaining our overall supply of employment lands to the 2031 Planning horizon.

Staff is also concerned with the potential impacts of the Technically Preferred Route to the Town's identified Future Strategic Employment Area (FSEA) lands, which extend between Tenth Line and Winston Churchill Boulevard and throughout the Lot 2 lands along the Premier Gateway Employment Area Corridor east of Eighth Line to Winston Churchill Boulevard. These lands support the long term vision of the Regional Official Plan and meet the intent of Provincial policy to provide strategic transportation access to FSEA lands. Town staff echo comments from Halton Region that it is recommended that the footprint for the new corridor be minimized where possible to preserve opportunities for potential future planned employment land development.

Transportation Considerations:

Based on a Transportation perspective, the technically preferred route may have significant impacts on the existing and planned transportation network. Staff is requesting that additional transportation analysis be provided by the GTA West project team to understand the impacts it may have on the existing and planned road network.

The Halton Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS) includes a proposed transportation network system which identifies the need for an east-west connection and Norval West By-pass to eliminate traffic through Norval. In our view, the technically preferred route does not provide an appropriate future east-west connection. As part of the GTA West project, a solution needs to be provided to address the existing congestion and increase in heavy truck volumes within Norval.

The proposed interchange at Highway 401/407 will provide access to the lands within the Premier Gateway Secondary Plan Area. It is anticipated that the proposed interchange at Highway 401/407 will increase demand through the existing Highway 401/Trafalgar Road interchange and the intersection of Trafalgar Road and Steeles Avenue. Staff is requesting that additional transportation analysis be completed by the GTA West Project Team to provide solutions to mitigate the impacts to the regional and local road network. As part of Premier Gateway Phase 1B Secondary Plan, detailed transportation analysis was completed. The need for additional capacity and the potential for a direct access from Trafalgar Road and Highway 401 off ramp have been analyzed and recommended by both Town and Region staff to address the capacity issue.

Staff is requesting that the GTA West project team meet with both the Town and Region staff to complete the necessary additional transportation analysis to adequately address our concerns.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommendations within this report support the Town's **Strategic Goal C: Foster a Prosperous Economy**.

This is supported through the following **Strategic Objectives**:

C.1 – To ensure an adequate supply of employment lands to provide flexibility and options for the business community and provide a range of job opportunities.

C.5 – To aggressively promote all of the Town's employment areas, including the opportunities provided by the 401/407 Employment Corridor.

C.7– To promote the Town's strategic location in the Greater Golden Horseshoe for economic development purposes.

Specifically, **Strategic Actions**:

C.1 (a) Undertake a Secondary Plan process for the Future Employment Area identified in OPA No. 10, and implement into Town Official Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact associated with this report.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Planning staff have consulted with staff from the Transportation and Public Works Department and staff from the Economic Development division regarding this report.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

There is no public engagement required at this stage.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the Cultural Vibrancy, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Health pillar of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is **Very Good**.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Upon Council approval of this report, it is recommended that Town Clerk forward a copy of this report to the GTA West Project Team, Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Town of Milton, the City of Brampton, the Regional Municipality of Halton, and the Regional Municipality of Peel for their information.

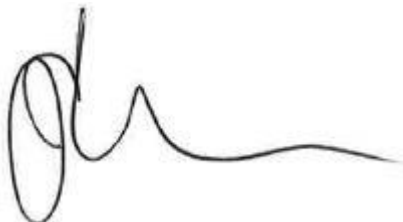
CONCLUSION:

Staff is requesting that the GTA West project team complete additional transportation analysis to understand the impacts the Technically Preferred Route may have on the existing and planned road network specifically in Norval as it relates to both congestion and increase in heavy truck volumes.

Confirmation of the Technically Preferred Route and Focused Analysis Area (FAA) must be completed in a timely manner in order to allow the Town and Halton Region to work together to expeditiously refine corridor protection policies in our respective Official Plans. This will also allow for the Town to minimize the impacts to property owners and identified Provincially Significant Employment Zone lands, including lands within the Premier Gateway Phase 2B Secondary Plan Area.

Staff will continue to keep Council apprised of any progress on the GTA West EA process and efforts to refine the Corridor Protection policies and mapping.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Linhardt', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Marshall', written in a cursive style.

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer