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June 15th, 2011

To: Mayor and Members of the York Regional Council
cc. Regional Clerk

GTA West Corridor Route Selection

I wish to comment on the choice of the Preliminary Route Planning Study Area for Stage 2 of the Environmental Assessment, specifically, the section which runs from approximately Highway 50 to Highway 400.

Throughout most of its roughly 15 kilometre length, this section runs mainly through the Greenbelt. This is in stark contrast to the sections in Halton Hills and Peel Regions which, admirably, only traverse very small sections of the Greenbelt. In fact, the total amount of Greenbelt affected in those regions is a fraction of the amount of Greenbelt affected in Vaughan.

While it is understood that the Ministry has protocols in place to moderate the impact of transportation corridors where they pass through Greenbelt areas it is impossible to eliminate the direct impact of a 210 metre corridor and the indirect impacts caused by attracting development nearby. The noise, air pollution, visual pollution and run off will affect a much wider area than the 210 metre corridor. It is difficult to believe that the Province defined the Greenbelt and other sensitive areas in order to provide massive transportation corridors if less intrusive alternatives are available

My understanding of the Province's Greenbelt policy is that new or expanding infrastructure shall avoid key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features unless need has been demonstrated and it has been established that there is no reasonable alternative. While there may be no reasonable alternatives within the

study area, this is not quite the same as saying there are no reasonable alternatives at all.

York Region has scheduled substantial upgrades to Major Mackenzie Drive and other roads in West Vaughan. These will help carry increased traffic between Highways 50 and 400. Peel Region is planning an east-west arterial connector to meet Major Mackenzie Drive. The Province has plans to extend Highway 427 to Major Mackenzie Drive. These and other developments by the Region will improve traffic flow in and through West Vaughan alleviating the need for a new corridor for the time being.

There may be an opportunity to develop a corridor north of the Greenbelt where intrusion into the Greenbelt would far less than if it were to run through Vaughan. However, to connect to the proposed preliminary route of the GTA West Corridor a crossing of the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine would be required. Any substantive extension of Highway 427 northward from Major Mackenzie Drive would have to do just that. I understand that this also would result in a significant intrusion into sensitive areas, but if a further extension of Highway 427 is a possibility within the foreseeable future there is no point having two corridors running through the Greenbelt if the transportation objectives can be achieved with one.

This should not be taken as a request to defer the planning and assessment stage of the GTA West Corridor or the commencement of Stage 2 of the process. Indeed, the more opportunity the public has to see the plans unfold the better. However, what is being asked is that Council request that the Ministry of Transportation evaluate alternative routings of the Corridor beyond the current Study Area and confirm that the negative socio/environmental impacts of the proposed route through West Vaughan are less than those of available alternatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Brand', with a stylized, flowing script.

David Brand.