



Transportation and Works
Commissioner's Office

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wayne Emmerson, Chair and Members of Transportation and Works Committee

FROM: Bruce Macgregor, Commissioner of Transportation and Works

DATE: February 26, 2007

RE: **Comments on Draft MTO Highway Access Management Guidelines**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation recently released draft Highway Access Management Guidelines for review. The notice was posted on the Provincial Environmental Bill of Rights registry with a commenting period that ended on February 9, 2007. Attached is a letter signed by the Commissioners of Transportation and Works and Planning and Development Services.

Regional staff had serious concerns with the direction taken by the Ministry of Transportation in these draft guidelines as identified in the attached letter. The guidelines propose an increase in current provincial standards regarding access location spacing on provincial highways. In many cases, staff believe these increased standards are contrary to the provincial objectives outlined in "Places to Grow", which call for urban intensification. In order to achieve intensification, we believe that access spacing standards frequently need to be reduced.

This letter is submitted to the Committee for information. Copies of the letter were also provided to all York Region local municipalities as well as the other GTA Regions, and the Cities of Toronto and Hamilton.

PM/BCM/ba



Planning and Development Services Department

Infrastructure Planning Branch

Fax No. 905-895-0191

February 8, 2007

EBR Coordinator
Transportation Planning Branch
301 St. Paul St., 2nd Floor
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4

Dear Sir / Madam:

Re: PE06E3201 – Highway Access Management Guideline

The Regional Municipality of York has undertaken a review of the Ministry of Transportation's Highway Access Management Guideline, Final Draft December 2006. We would like to commend the Ministry on the development of the Highway Access Management Guideline and are fully supportive of the Ministry becoming involved early in the planning process for any new development in proximity to a Provincial Highway. However, we do have serious issues with the content of these draft guidelines and **request that implementation be deferred until the following issues are satisfactorily addressed.** Our main comments are as follows:

1. The MTO Guideline conflicts with the Places to Grow Act.

Through the "Places to Grow" Act, the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe identifies intensification as a key component to support the future growth of the region through the identification of Urban Growth Centres. Chapter 7, Spacing, Density and Location Standards of the Guideline increase the standards within the Ministries Permit Control Area for private and public access to the arterial road system.

The Guideline argues that the development of access management guidelines ensures that Ministry can extend the life of its highways, increase public safety and reduce traffic congestion; however, the standards simply push the traffic problems further away from Provincial highways onto municipal or regional roads. They do not take into account the total transportation perspective, including transit, pedestrian and cycling movements. For example, these guidelines could result in less development being allowable close to Provincial freeways resulting in less compact urban design. If this is the case, then can municipalities achieve the intensification goals that have been set by the Province? Or, should MTO be looking at reducing standards to achieve the intensification targets?

Prior to the approval of the guidelines, a full assessment of the implications of these draft guidelines needs to be undertaken by the MTO. The assessment needs to look at the full transportation network (not just the Provincial facilities) as well as considering the "Places to Grow" intensification objectives.

2. The "Best Practice" review could also benefit from an assessment of higher urban density locations.

Section 1.1 notes that the Guideline is a compilation of access management policies drawn from the experience and best practices from transportation agencies in the United States and Canada, as

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well as the Access Management Guidelines (2003) developed by the Transportation Research Board. Further review and clarification is required to confirm the extent to which the sample of locations and policies adequately represent the density targets the Region is required to achieve, through the Provincial Growth Plan, in its urban areas. Additional analysis may be required to evaluate design alternatives and standards from outside North America that may better represent these density targets and assist the Region and the Province in supporting this vision.

3. The MTO Guideline should give credence to adjacent land uses approved under the Planning Act.

Historically the Ministry has been hesitant to commit to access options identified through the planning and development process, specifically at the Official Plan, Master Plan or Secondary Plan stage. An additional section must be added to the guideline that speaks more fully to the Ministry's participation in the planning process. This should include the level of participation and linkages to the general administration process of a future Entrance Permit Application to ensure that strategic infrastructure identified in local and Regional Official Plans and Secondary Plans can be implemented with the full support of the Ministry.

4. The MTO Guideline should also give credence to planned adjacent road improvements with status under the Environmental Assessment Act.

Although the Guideline has provisions for existing access locations which are less than these standards, to be "grandfathered", there is no indication as to the process the Ministry will engage for locations that are planned but not yet built. These can include access locations identified in Environmental Assessments that are underway or approved, secondary plans, or draft plans of subdivision. The Guideline does make reference that the standards identified for the Functional Intersection area in Figure 14, 15, and 16 which identify the desirable offset criteria for various access connection types are not to be applied retroactively. However in section 7.2, the Guideline fails to identify how access locations that are planned, but not constructed, prior to the implementation of the guideline are subject to the criteria. As such, this section should further speak to the approval process of these existing development plans.

5. The MTO Guideline appears to exceed the statutory limits of control.

The Guideline relies on the statutory authority as deemed under the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act (PTHIA). The PTHIA identifies areas of control as summarized in Figure 3 and Figure 4 of the Guideline; however, it is not clear that MTO has the authority to limit access to municipal roads within 800m of a freeway. The jurisdictional limits of MTO need to be clearly identified and not exceeded by these guidelines.

6. Some minimum spacing requirements require clarification to remove ambiguity.

6.1 Further clarification is required with respect to the offset spacing requirements for the Functional Interchange Area defined in Figures 17, 18, and 19.

- a. Under what circumstances does one apply the desirable spacing from W (end of the taper) over X (end of the radius) to the centreline of a Public Road or signalized Commercial / Private Road access.
- b. Where the centreline of a Public Road or signalized Commercial / Private Road access as defined by W or X is a 4-legged intersection, is the desirable spacing calculated from the on-ramp or the off-ramp.

6.2 Table 5 – Access Connection Spacing and Density Standards define the minimum interchange spacing of 2.0 km. Additional information is required to define how this measurement is to be calculated.

7. The “Highway Classification System” requires updating prior to implementing this MTO guideline.

The access restrictions throughout the Guideline are based on the Functional Classification System for the highway network (Figures 5 – 8) as defined in Chapter 4, Highway Designation and Classification. The degree to which access restrictions are imposed on a road section is directly related to its functional classification. Prior to the adoption of the Guideline, the Ministry should undertake a review of the classification system assigned to a road section. For example, Highway 48 north of Highway 7 is defined as Arterial (2B). A portion of this road travels through the urban areas of Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville and, as such, the 1.6km desirable, and 800m minimum standard between public road intersection spacing is neither appropriate nor achievable.

8. Mandatory reverse frontages in all instances may not be appropriate in developed areas.

Although development patterns such as reverse frontages avoid or minimize highway access management issues, as identified in Section 1.3, developments fronting a “window” or “buffer” street achieve the same result while creating a transit supportive and pedestrian friendly environment. Furthermore, reverse frontage developments are prohibited along Regional Corridors under Section 5.5.18 of the Regional Official Plan. The reference to reverse frontages should be revised.

9. Coordination of “Access Management Plans” and the subsequent “Access Permit(s)” is not clear.

By definition, the Highway Access Management / Interchange-Highway Access Management Plans provide the approved framework for the implementation of future access locations along a segment of Provincial highway or interchange from a strategic review of existing and planned connections of the road network. However, it is not clearly defined as to the triggers for when an Access Management Plan is developed or its role in the Access Permit process. For example, will the Ministry develop an Access Management Plan in coordination with a Secondary Plan approval? If an access location and configuration is identified in the Access Management Plan, does that simplify the Permit Approval process or are future access locations still required to fulfill the full “Decision Making Process” as defined in Chapter 9 of the Guideline.

10. Design and approval process at freeway terminals is favourable.

The introduction of the design and approval process for future Access Roads at Freeway Terminals (Appendix E) is supported by the Region in that it will make the process clear for all stakeholders. Notwithstanding the issues addressed relating to concerns in meeting the Provinces intensification targets, where feasible, the introduction of this policy will assist greatly in meeting these future targets by streamlining the process.

11. Direct access to (and from) interchange ramps could, in some urban instances, result in better traffic coordination.

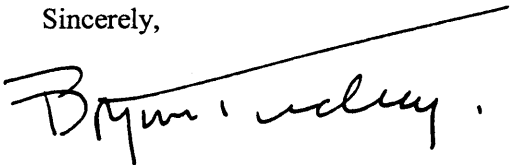
In addition to the existing work undertaken to develop standards for access opposite ramp terminals as defined in Access Roads at Freeway Terminals (Appendix E), additional analysis should be carried out to evaluate and include design options for direct access to and from interchange ramps. The development of these design options would assist in improving traffic circulation by reducing the turning demand at freeway ramp terminal and arterial roads.

12. The MTO Guideline should more clearly delineate Provincial responsibilities in connecting highways to adjoining road networks.

The Guideline should be accompanied by a better understanding of the infrastructure under the responsibility of the Province. For example, although the guidelines allow a minimum interchange spacing of 2km along a controlled access highway, York Region has been informed that the Ministry of Transportation will not fund many of these new interchanges even though they meet the requirements of the Guideline. These new interchanges are required to support Provincially mandated growth, therefore they should be fully funded by MTO.

The Region of York formally requests that the Ministry of Transportation defer of the adoption of these guidelines until the Ministry has had the opportunity to fully consult with us and other stakeholders on these issues and provide the additional analysis identified in this letter. For further information please do not hesitate to contact Paul May, Director of Infrastructure Planning at (905) 830-4444 X 5029.

Sincerely,



Bryan Tuckey, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner, Planning & Dev. Services



Bruce Macgregor, P.Eng
Commissioner, Transportation & Works

PM/MH/mh

Copy to: Ken Teasdale, MTO
Brad Graham, PIR