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HIGHWAY 427 CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, April 14, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council support the initiation of the Ministry of Transportation's Highway 427 Corridor Environmental Assessment and staff be directed to work with the Province and other affected municipalities to define the study area limits of the corridor.
2. Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) and Ministry of the Environment (MOE) be requested to expedite the environmental assessment process.
3. Copies of this report be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the Ontario Ministers of Transportation and the Environment, York area MPPs and to the Clerks of the municipalities of Vaughan, King, Peel Region, Brampton, and Caledon.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Regional Council of MTO's initiation of the Highway 427 Corridor EA study for the southern Vaughan part of the corridor and the associated timelines for specific phases of the study. This report also addresses resolutions from the Councils of the Cities of Brampton and Vaughan regarding the need for a municipally lead EA study to address the Highway 427 extension and associated arterial road connection issues.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Provincial Initiatives

MTO completed the Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study in December 2001 and the Simcoe Area Transportation Network Needs Assessment Study in June 2002. The Highway 427 Extension Needs Assessment Study confirmed the need for a new north-south transportation corridor from Highway 7 to the area of Highway 89 and a widening of Highway 400 to Highway 89. The Simcoe Area Transportation Network

Needs Assessment Study also recommended a new transportation corridor from Highway 7 to Highway 11 north of Barrie and expansion of Highway 400.

In light of these two studies, the MTO initiated the Highway 427 Extension Transportation Corridor EA study in November 2002. This study was to determine the alignment of the Highway 427 Extension over the limits of the corridor, from Highway 7 to a point north of the City of Barrie. In the fall of 2003, the current provincial government halted the EA.

The recently released “Places to Grow” draft growth plan (February 2005) shows the Highway 427 extended to the Canadian Pacific (CP) Inter-modal facility in the City of Vaughan. This provincial policy paper sets the context for all provincial infrastructure priorities. The plan has a specific reference to corridors such as Highway 427 and identified a linkage between Highway 427 and the CP Inter-modal yard in Vaughan. The Draft Growth Plan has also identified improved access to inter-modal facilities as the first priority in moving goods, along with connecting international gateways.

3.2 York/Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study

In January, 2001, The Regional Municipality of York together with The Regional Municipality of Peel, City of Vaughan and City of Brampton initiated a Boundary Area Transportation study (BAT Study) to address needs and opportunities in the rapidly growing area bounded by Steeles Avenue to the south, Mayfield Road / Nashville Road to the north, Airport Road to the west and Highway 27 to the east. The study was completed and approved in 2003.

The BAT study identified a long-term (2031) transportation plan as well as short-term road improvements needed to address the growing transportation demand in the study area. The BAT study short-term road network was developed to address interim traffic demand prior to the ultimate extension of Highway 427 by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). The key improvements included a proposed four-lane east-west collector road (Fogal Rd./ Zenway Blvd.) north of Highway 7, running from the Gore Road to Highway 27, and a proposed four-lane north-south arterial road from the existing terminus of Highway 427 to Fogal Road / Zenway Blvd. These improvements, once implemented, would provide interim relief to the intersections of Highway 7/Highway 50 and Highway 7/Highway 27. MTO has indicated support in principle for the proposed Highway 427 Arterial Road Extension, subject to detailed engineering approvals and a legal agreement.

Further, at its meeting on November 18, 2004, Regional Council passed a resolution containing the following:

“ The Ministry of Transportation be requested to give the environmental assessment (EA) for the Highway 427 Extension a higher priority and resume work on the EA without further delay; and

“ The Ministry of Transportation be requested to undertake a route planning phase of the Highway 427 Extension EA in two sections so that the sections of the route within the designated urban area of Vaughan can be identified and protected as soon as possible; and more particularly that the portion lying between Highway 7 and Rutherford Rd”.

3.3 City of Brampton Council Resolution

City of Brampton Council on November 22, 2004 passed a resolution requesting York Region, Peel Region, City of Vaughan, Town of Caledon and the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario to support and participate in a joint municipally initiated multi-purpose study that incorporates an EA process to establish the preferred Highway 427 extension route to the vicinity of King Road and that also addresses the related arterial road network and interchanges with the extended Highway 427 (*Attachment 1*).

3.4 City of Vaughan Council Resolution

City of Vaughan Council on February 14, 2005 passed a resolution that a Request for Proposals be prepared for the Highway 427 Employment Area Secondary Plan Study (*Attachment 2*).

The study is to consist of two phases:

- a) Phase 1 – Highway 427 Corridor Identification Study; and
- b) Phase 2 – Land Use Study and Secondary Plan.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 York/Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study Implementation

York Region is moving ahead on the arterial extension of Highway 427 from Highway 7 to Fogal Road / Zenway Boulevard. At its meeting on November 18, 2004, Regional Council adopted recommendations to engage CH2M Hill Canada Ltd. for the detailed design and contract preparation of the interim arterial extension of Highway 427.

It is anticipated that this assignment will be completed by the fall of 2005 with a construction start in the spring of 2006. With the Highway 427 Arterial Road Extension to Fogal Rd/Zenway in place, this new road facility will divert traffic from the congested Highway 7/Highway 50 intersection.

4.2 Provincial Initiative

The Province has now restarted the Highway 427 Corridor EA Study but only for the southern part of the corridor in the City of Vaughan. The EA study being proposed is the first step in addressing the transportation problems in the corridor and the problems associated with the movement of people and goods as well as the development pressures surrounding the existing terminus.

MTO's revised Highway 427 EA Study is proposed to be a two part process as required in an Individual Environmental Assessment study. The first part will define the Terms of Reference for the second part of the study where the route planning phase will be completed. The exact study area limits will be determined as part of the Terms of Reference work.

The following is MTO's proposed timeline for the new Highway 427 EA Study:

Table 1
MTO's Proposed Timelines

Activity	Start	Completion
Prepare Draft Terms of Reference	April 2005	Sept/Oct 2005 (target approval date)
MTO Consultant Acquisition Process	Fall 2005	Spring 2006
EA Study	Spring 2006	Fall 2007
MOE Approval of ESR	Fall 2007	Spring 2008

Staff are of the opinion that this schedule could be shortened by overlapping the consultant acquisition step with the Terms of Reference preparation step.

4.3 Brampton and Vaughan Council Resolutions

The initiation of MTO's Highway 427 EA Study negates the need for a municipal EA study to identify the highway alignment and property to be protected. As well, MTO's study will address interchanges needed to connect the arterial road network to the highway extension.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no financial implication resulting from this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Traffic congestion around the Highway 427 terminus at Highway 7 would be alleviated significantly once Highway 427 is extended northerly. As well, lands in the City of Vaughan that are currently on hold, pending the identification of the alignment of the Highway 427 Extension, could be developed once the EA for the extension is completed. Thus, the earlier completion of the Highway 427 Extension EA and construction of the Arterial Extension are preferred.

The City of Vaughan Council has authorised funds for both Phases 1 and 2 of the 427 employment area secondary plan study and has approved the terms of reference for the Phase 1 work.

7. CONCLUSION

The MTO initiative to commence and expedite the Highway 427 Corridor EA Study for the southern section of the corridor in the City of Vaughan is welcomed and supported. The Provincial study negates the need for a municipally lead EA and property protection study as identified in the Cities of Vaughan and Brampton Council Resolutions.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)