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PINE VALLEY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 9, 2004, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region participate as co-proponent with the City of Vaughan for a joint Individual Environmental Assessment for transportation improvements in the Pine Valley Drive Corridor from Langstaff Road to Teston Road.
2. The Region endorse City of Vaughan's request to the Minister of the Environment to issue an Order under Section 16 of the Environmental Assessment Act requiring that the Pine Valley Corridor between Langstaff Road and Teston Road undergo an Individual Environmental Assessment.
3. The Commissioner of Transportation and Works report back at major milestones of the joint study.
4. A copy of this report be sent by the Regional Clerk to the Clerks at the City of Vaughan and the Ministry of Environment.

2. PURPOSE

This report is to respond to a request by the City of Vaughan to the Region to participate as co-proponent in a joint Individual Environmental Assessment (EA) for transportation improvements in the Pine Valley Drive corridor.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 General

Regional Council on May 20, 2004 adopted Clause 10 of Report No. 5 of the Transportation and Works Committee as amended, authorizing the Region to participate as co-proponent with the City of Vaughan in a Schedule 'C' Class EA for transportation improvements in the Pine Valley Drive Corridor from Langstaff Road to Teston Road.

At its meeting on May 25, 2004, Vaughan Council adopted the following resolution:

“That the City request the Minister of the Environment to issue an Order under Section 16 of the Environmental Assessment Act requiring that the Pine Valley Corridor between Langstaff Road and Teston Road undergo an Individual Environmental Assessment in accordance with the Draft Order, and that the current Class Environmental Assessment be converted into the Individual Environmental Assessment; and

That the Region of York be requested to support the request and to participate in the Individual Environmental Assessment as a co-proponent.”

A copy of the full Vaughan Council resolution is included as *Attachment 1*.

3.2 Road Jurisdiction and Existing Conditions

The Region has jurisdiction over Pine Valley Drive from Steeles Avenue to Teston Road with the exception of the section from Langstaff Road to Rutherford Road which is under the jurisdiction of the City of Vaughan.

The section of Pine Valley Drive from Steeles Avenue to Langstaff Road consists of a four lane cross section with a six lane structure over Highway 407. The adjacent lands along this section are generally developed. There are predominantly employment uses along the section from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7 and residential subdivisions from Highway 7 to Langstaff Road.

The section of Pine Valley Drive from Langstaff Road to about 1.2 km north consists of a two lane rural cross section. Pine Valley Drive terminates at this point (at the intersection with Clubhouse Road) with no current connection to Rutherford Road, which is approximately 800m to the north. The City of Vaughan has been conducting a Class EA for transportation improvements to Pine Valley Drive from Langstaff Road to Rutherford Road (discussed in detail in section 3.3 and 4 of this report). The adjacent lands include estate residential, a golf course and natural features including significant valley and woodlot areas.

The section of Pine Valley Drive from Rutherford Road north to Teston Road is currently a two lane road with a hard surfaced rural cross section. The adjacent existing land uses are generally rural in nature (farm land, open fields, woodlots, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority lands etc.) with some residential subdivisions in various stages of development.

3.3 Planned Road Improvements

In the spring of 2002, the City of Vaughan initiated a Schedule ‘C’ Class EA for the section of Pine Valley Drive from Langstaff Road to Rutherford Road. Road improvements for this section of Pine Valley Drive have been identified in Vaughan’s OPA 600 and the Region’s Transportation Master Plan. The Class EA, which has not been completed, has identified a preferred solution to widen Pine Valley Drive to four

lanes from Langstaff Road north to the current terminus and construction of a new four lane road from the existing terminus to Rutherford Road. Information on the status of Vaughan's Class EA is provided in section 4.

Widening from two to four lanes for the section of Pine Valley Drive from Rutherford Road to Teston Road is identified in the Region's Transportation Master Plan and the 2003 Development Charge Background Study. The section from Rutherford Road to Major Mackenzie Drive is in the 10-Year Roads Program scheduled for construction in 2009. The section from Major Mackenzie to Teston Road is planned in the 2014 to 2021 period.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In the spring of 2002, the City of Vaughan initiated a Schedule 'C' Class EA for the section of Pine Valley Drive from Langstaff Road to Rutherford Road. Vaughan's Class EA included development of 13 alternatives to increase transportation capacity in the corridor. The preferred solution identified through the EA process is to widen Pine Valley Drive to four lanes from Langstaff Road north to the current terminus and construction of a new four lane road from the terminus to Rutherford Road.

Through the consultation process in the Class EA, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has identified concerns with environmental effects which may result from construction of the road widening and new road link. The TRCA has requested that the Minister of the Environment issue a "Part II Order" which would require the City of Vaughan to undertake an Individual EA for the proposed undertaking.

The City of Vaughan, after consultation with the TRCA and Ministry of the Environment (MOE), has agreed that elevating the current Class EA study to an Individual Environmental Assessment would be the preferred method to address the significant concerns raised by the TRCA. Regional staff concurs that an Individual EA is the right process to use to address the sensitive environmental issues and community interest in this project.

The section of Pine Valley Drive from Rutherford Road to Major Mackenzie Drive is scheduled for construction in 2009. Regional staff had planned to commence a separate Class EA in 2005 for road improvements to this section of Pine Valley Drive. The section from Major Mackenzie to Teston Road is planned to be improved by 2021.

There are benefits to both the Region and City of Vaughan in combining efforts and undertaking a single EA for the entire Pine Valley Drive corridor. A joint study would adhere better to the intent of the EA Act. As noted in the Municipal Class EA document, smaller components should be consolidated into a single EA where practical. The MOE encourages coordination of projects wherever possible to provide a more comprehensive assessment of environmental effects.

A joint study will also provide for streamlined public and stakeholder consultation resulting in less confusion, which often accompanies multiple studies in close proximity. A joint study will also provide for a more efficient and comprehensive transportation planning effort in the corridor, regardless of road jurisdiction.

If a joint study is agreed to in principle, Region and Vaughan staff will work together to finalize the details of an agreement to proceed, including cost sharing and a consultant selection process.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the scope, complexity and politically sensitive nature of the proposed study, it is difficult to foresee all the issues that will be raised during the EA and the level of effort that will be required to address those issues. However, the total cost for the EA is expected to be in the range of \$600,000 to \$800,000 and take several years to complete. Staff will meet with the City of Vaughan staff to discuss cost sharing options.

The current 10-Year Roads Program includes a planned expenditure of \$250,000 in 2005/2006 to undertake a separate EA for improvements to Pine Valley Drive north of Rutherford Road. If a joint study for the entire Pine Valley Drive corridor proceeds, the expenditures already planned for 2005/2006 can be applied toward the cost of the joint study. Additional funds that may be required for 2005/2006 to complete the EA will be identified in the 2005 Roads Capital Program.

If the proposed joint study proceeds immediately, project expenditure of about \$150,000 can be expected in 2004. Assuming a 50% contribution, the 2004 Regional expenditure is expected to be \$75,000. Although this specific expenditure was not foreseen when the 2004 Budget was prepared, there are sufficient funds in the budget to cover the expected 2004 project costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

This report responds to a request by the City of Vaughan for a joint Individual EA study to address needs and opportunities for Transportation Improvements in the Pine Valley Drive corridor.

A joint study will provide for streamlined public and stakeholder consultation and provide for comprehensive transportation planning in the entire Pine Valley Drive corridor.

7. CONCLUSION

The request from the City of Vaughan for the Region to be a co-proponent is reasonable and recommended as it will provide a coordinated process to address both local and Regional transportation needs in the Pine Valley Drive corridor from Langstaff Road to Teston Road.

A joint EA provides for streamlined public consultation and is preferred by the MOE as it allows for a more comprehensive assessment of potential environmental effects.

The Commissioner of Transportation and Works will report back at major milestones of the joint study.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing is included with this report and is also on file in the Regional Clerk's Office.)