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PINE VALLEY DRIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR INDIVIDUAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STATUS UPDATE

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, June 5, 2006, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Minister of Transportation be requested to provide a detailed schedule for the completion of the Highway 427 Extension Individual Environmental Assessment and the implementation of the preferred alternative.
2. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Ministry of Transportation and Clerks of the City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, Regional Municipality of Peel and City of Vaughan for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of the Pine Valley Drive Transportation Corridor Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA).

3. BACKGROUND

The north-south transportation deficiencies in the western section of the City of Vaughan have long been attributed to the discontinuity in Pine Valley Drive between Langstaff Road and Rutherford Road.

To address these deficiencies the City of Vaughan, being the owner and authority for this section of Pine Valley Drive, including the unopened section of the road allowance, initiated a Schedule C Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) in January 2002. The purpose of this Class EA was to obtain Environmental Assessment Act clearance to widen and reconstruct Pine Valley Drive and complete the connection between Langstaff Road and Rutherford Road.

Following the commencement of the Class EA study and throughout 2002 and 2003, significant opposition to the undertaking was encountered from several stakeholders, including the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), First Nations, Friends of Boyd Park and others. Of primary concern to these stakeholders was the potential for any alternative to complete the connection between Langstaff Road and

Rutherford Road would impact Boyd Park and the surrounding natural heritage features. To document the significance to their concerns, in early 2004 several of these stakeholders requested the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) issue a Part II Order thereby elevating the undertaking to an IEA.

Recognizing the significance of natural heritage features of Boyd Park, the Council of the City of Vaughan in May 2004 requested the MOE elevate the Municipal Class EA to an IEA. In June 2004, Regional Council supported this request and further agreed to participate as a co-proponent on the IEA.

In July 2004, the MOE issued the Part II Order elevating the study to an IEA. In response, the City of Vaughan and York Region prepared a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the IEA, which expanded the study scope and study area to encompass the area from Highway 407 to Teston Road and from Highway 27 to Weston Road. On December 3, 2004, the ToR was submitted to the MOE for approval. On February 13, 2006, the MOE approved the ToR subject to six amendments.

These amendments are:

1. In Section 3.1, under the purpose of the undertaking, the reference to “north-south” be deleted thereby implying that the study shall address not only north-south transportation deficiencies but also east-west transportation deficiencies within the study area.
2. In Section 6, the evaluation methodology be structured such that the environmental effects will be assessed not only on the significance of the expected effects but also the duration of the effects.
3. In Section 8.2, under consultation, that the public, stakeholders and agencies have an opportunity to provide input into the development of criteria for the evaluation to assess and compare trade-offs or the advantages and disadvantages between alternatives before any final decision is made.
4. In Section 8.2, under consultation, the list of contacts shall include, but not be limited to municipal agencies, provincial agencies, First Nations, including the Mississauga of the New Credit and the Huron-Wendat Nation and other interested stakeholders.
5. **Any alternative proposed to be located through the Boyd Conservation Area is excluded from consideration in the IEA.**
6. The IEA will be prepared in strict accordance with the ToR and the requirements for the preparation of the IEA included therein.

With reference to amendment 5, it should be noted that with this decision the MOE has removed any opportunity to complete the connection of Pine Valley Drive between Langstaff Road and Rutherford Road through Boyd Park. This decision on the ToR

precludes the City of Vaughan and/or York Region from proceeding with a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment or IEA on this link.

3.1 York Region Programmed Road Improvement Projects

Notwithstanding the impact the MOE's decision will have on any planned work to Pine Valley Drive between Langstaff Road and Rutherford Road, under the approved 10-Year Roads Construction Program, the Region is programming improvements within or near the study area as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Programmed Road Improvements Within or Near the Study Area

Project		Year
Portage/Applewood Crescent Crossing at Highway 400		2006
Teston Road	Weston Road to Highway 400	2006
Weston Road	Major Mackenzie Drive to Teston Road	2006
Highway 50	Highway 7 to Rutherford Road, 2007	2007
Highway 427	Arterial Road Extension	2007
Langstaff Road	Highway 50 to Highway 27	2007
Major Mackenzie Drive	Highway 27 to Weston Road	2009
Highway 50	Rutherford Road to Nashville Road	2009
Weston Road	Highway 407 to Highway 7	2011
Weston Road	Steeles Avenue to Highway 407	2011
Highway 50	Nashville Road to Mayfield Road	2012
Pine Valley Drive	Rutherford Road to Major Mackenzie Drive	2013
Weston Road	Highway 7 to Rutherford Road	2013
Rutherford Road	Pine Valley Drive to Weston Road	2014
Major Mackenzie Drive	Highway 50 to Highway 27	2014

3.2 Other Contemplated Transportation Improvement Projects

There are other major transportation studies underway within or near the study area. These include:

- Highway 427 Extension Corridor Study from the existing terminus at Highway 7 north to south of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt, initiated by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO).
- Highway 427/Highway 50 Network study, initiated by Peel Region and the City of Brampton.
- GTA West Corridor, initiated by the MTO.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In response to the decision rendered by the MOE, York Region staff have been working with staff at the City of Vaughan to understand the implications of the MOE decision.

Based on this consultation it has been concluded that the intent of the MOE in approving ToR, subject to the amendments, is to encourage the City of Vaughan and York Region to complete a comprehensive study that analyzes the transportation deficiencies and develop alternatives to address the deficiencies on a network/wide area basis and not to look only at individual corridors. Therefore, the preferred approach is to proceed with the IEA for a comprehensive study based on the approved ToR. The study area and scope should also be expanded to include all programmed projects within western section of the City of Vaughan bounded by Highway 407, Highway 50, Teston Road and Highway 400. Proceeding under this approach will provide the following:

- Efforts combined into one large project.
- All possible alternatives to be examined.
- Stakeholders can not accuse York Region/City of Vaughan of “piece-mealing”.
- Will address projects with significant environmental constraints.
- Will address new or realigned north-south and east-west roadways that maybe required.
- Will address all transportation deficiencies in western Vaughan and secure EA Act clearance for all projects.
- Approved ToR may accelerate the delivery of key projects.
- Complies with approval conditions of Pine Valley Drive ToR.

It is important to note that the approved ToR provides the City of Vaughan and York Region with the necessary approvals to proceed with a comprehensive study to identify the transportation deficiencies within the study area and to develop alternative solutions to address the identified deficiencies by not only looking at north-south corridors but also east-west corridors.

York Region staff have had preliminary discussions with both MOE and TRCA staff on the proposed approach to move this process forward. Both groups appeared satisfied and supportive of the approach that is being used by York Region to undertake this study. These and other agencies will continue to be involved in the project as we move forward.

York Region staff have consulted with City of Vaughan staff and MOE staff to resolve several issues including; co-proponency with the City of Vaughan, expansion of the study area and the study name.

The MOE amending the ToR such that no alternatives to the undertaking can go through Boyd Park has removed the possibility of a connection between Langstaff Road and Rutherford Road. As such, the City of Vaughan may wish to remove themselves as a co-

proponent on this study. The MOE has confirmed that, if necessary, York Region can proceed with the IEA on the approved ToR as a sole proponent.

The study area shown on the approved ToR extends from Highway 407 to Teston Road and Highway 27 to Weston Road. York Region staff have confirmed with the MOE that expanding the study area does not require an amendment to the approved ToR. MOE further indicated that they would support an expansion of the study area.

In light of the decision to proceed with the study as an IEA for western Vaughan, the current name of the ToR, being Pine Valley Drive Transportation Corridor EA, is no longer appropriate. York Region staff are proceeding to change name of the study so that it is more consistent with the actual scope. York Region staff have confirmed with the MOE that this modification does not require an amendment to the approved ToR.

4.1 Coordination with Highway 427 Extension IEA

As noted above, MTO is the proponent for the Highway 427 Extension IEA. This project has experienced significant delay which has in turn delayed the implementation of this much needed transportation facility.

The direct result to York Region is the continued congestion on the arterial road network in western Vaughan. This in turn challenges the ability of the current York Region road network to accommodate the existing and predicted traffic. Further, the complexity of the Highway 427 Extension IEA and the uncertainty with respect to the schedule and timing for the construction of the preferred alternative have impacted the planning of York Region's road network.

In order to accurately plan and complete a comprehensive work plan for the Pine Valley Drive Corridor IEA York Region staff must have accurate and complete information on MTO's schedule for completing the Highway 427 Extension IEA and the intended timeline for implementing the preferred alternative.

4.2 Anticipated Schedule

York Region staff have assessed the scope of work and the complexity of this work and have developed a preliminary schedule of milestone events. The key dates are as follows:

Finalize ToR with expanded study area, proponentcy and name	June	2006
Retain IEA Consultant	September	2006
Issue Notice of Commencement	Fall	2006
Complete IEA (anticipated two year duration)	Fall	2008
Issue Notice of Completion	Fall	2008
Secure MOE Approval	Winter	2009

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be additional costs to complete the proposed Pine Valley Drive Corridor IEA under an expanded scope and study area that encompasses all of western Vaughan.

It should be noted that the increase in cost to complete the Pine Valley Drive Corridor IEA under the expanded study area will likely be offset by a reduction in the costs to complete other environmental assessment studies for projects currently identified on the approved 10-Year Roads Construction Program.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The planning, design and construction of major capital road infrastructure improvements in western Vaughan is required in order to relieve current congestion and accommodate future growth. While proceeding under the recommended approach may delay the delivery road projects programmed for the near term, there is benefit associated with securing EA Act approval for all road improvement projects in western Vaughan

Further, the most critical road project identified on the 10-Year Roads Construction Program is Major Mackenzie Drive between Highway 50 and Weston Road. This project is of such complexity and environmental significance that it may warrant completion as an IEA. If it is determined that an IEA is required for Major Mackenzie Drive including it as part of the IEA for western Vaughan will actually accelerate delivery of the project.

7. CONCLUSION

The environmental sensitivity of the cultural and natural heritage resources of Boyd Park have resulted in the deletion from further consideration of any road improvement alternative that may go through Boyd Park. This restriction has a significant impact on the proposed Pine Valley Drive Corridor IEA study and has resulted in staff reconsidering the study area and process under which the major road improvement projects will be planned in western Vaughan.

In light of the approval for the Pine Valley Drive Corridor IEA, subject to amendment, York Region staff have determined the preferred approach to proceeding with the study is to expand the study area westerly to Highway 50 and complete the planning for all road improvements in western Vaughan under one IEA.

York Region staff have met with staff from the MOE, TRCA and the City of Vaughan to ensure their acceptance of the intended course of action. To date, representatives from these agencies/governments have appeared satisfied with York Region's approach.

Additionally, in response to MTO initiating the Highway 427 extension IEA, the Region of Peel, City of Brampton and Town of Caledon commenced a network planning study for the Highway 50/Highway 427 extension area arterial road network. As such, given the potential for a future Highway 427 at Major Mackenzie Drive interchange and the Highway 50 Regional boundary, the IEA for western Vaughan will have to be coordinated with MTO, the Region of Peel, City of Brampton and Town of Caledon.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the June 14, 2006 Committee meeting.)