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Concerned Citizens of King Township

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Mr. Neil Ahmed, P. Eng., Consultant Project Manager
McCormick Rankin Corporation
2655 North Sheridan Way, Suite 300
Mississauga, ON L5K 2P8

27th June, 2011



Dear Mr. Ahmed:

Re: GTA West Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study
Comments on the Draft Transportation Development Strategy Report

I am writing you on behalf of Concerned Citizens of King Township, a grassroots volunteer organization representing 190 family members with an interest in planning matters which impact King Township.

It is our contention that the GTA West corridor is not consistent with the intent of the provincial Places to Grow policy. This policy encourages intensified growth in urbanized areas, to discourage encroachment into Greenbelt lands and to encourage better utilization of our **existing** infrastructure. Building new highways to service urban centres across Greenbelt designated agricultural and natural heritage lands, is not consistent with a sustainable planning approach particularly when there are viable alternatives.

Representatives of Concerned Citizens of King Township, Margaret Coburn and Fred Jessop have been actively engaged in the GTA West Corridor Planning exercise since the beginning. We have attended all 8 GTA West Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings spread over about 3 years.

The preamble to the GTA West Corridor EA clearly states that the purpose of the GTA West Corridor study is to improve the connection between Vaughan City Centre and Guelph. If indeed a new vehicular corridor is the only solution for the stated problem, we believe that the proposed solution contained in the draft report is the most appropriate route.

The interests of Vaughan were made apparent for the first time, at the 8th GTA West Community Advisory Group Meeting on May 3rd. At this meeting Ms Schulte, a Vaughan Councillor, asked why the Oak Ridges Moraine- Greenbelt north of Vaughan was excluded from the study area, contending the proposed solution would destroy valuable farm land in Vaughan. We agree with Councillor Schulte, that the location of the proposed highway in Vaughan would negatively impact the Purpleville Creek, a cold water fishery in the Humber Valley, however we believe strongly that any alternatives that are considered must first and foremost be consistent with the purpose of the EA. Moving this corridor from the whitebelt lands to the Greenbelt lands is not consistent with either the purpose of the study or provincial policy and would require more extensive study to meet the test of no reasonable alternative.

During discussion of the GTA West Corridor at a recent York Region Economic Development Committee meeting Ms Schulte proposed to investigate an alternative route between King Road and Highway 9 in order to protect the fragile East Humber Valley lands. The proposed new route was not supported by the Region of York. Apparently it was suggested that Highway 9 be used as the east west corridor with an extended Highway 427 to make a connection south into Caledon. This alternative plan would protect the East Humber lands in Vaughan at the expense of protecting the Greenbelt including the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Holland River watershed. We feel it is inappropriate at this late date for Ms Schulte to propose an alternative particularly since her suggestion of moving the corridor north does not meet the need nor the purpose of the study.

In early discussions with the study group 3 years ago, we voiced opposition to this general concept of a route traversing the Moraine with its many natural heritage features. Our arguments were evidently accepted as the northern boundary for the study group was fixed. In keeping with the intent to connect Vaughan City Centre to Guelph, a more southerly location may be suitable, however a better alternative would be to widen the existing roadways serving Vaughan City Centre, expand rail service and **not build a new highway in the Greenbelt.**

There are a number of transportation routes that will be affected by the route selected. As stated previously, the proposed solution contained in the draft report is the most appropriate route identified to date, provided that it does not force a further extension of Hwy 427 east of Bolton. It must be recognized that Caledon wants Hwy 427 to be extended north to Highway 9. We are opposed to an extension of the 427 through King Township as King is not an urban growth centre. Caledon's strategic self interest in the 427 is critical when evaluating the GTA West corridor options and any connections to the two corridors should be located within the areas they are servicing, south Bolton and Vaughan City Centre. One of the reasons that the current planned extension of Hwy 427 ends at Major Mackenzie is that it will be far enough south of Bolton to allow future extensions into Bolton while also connecting to the 410. Unless the new GTA West Highway is far enough south where the connection to Highway 427 is made, the route of any further extension of 427 across the Moraine will have been fixed because of the proximity to Bolton.

It must also be recognized that a decision on the GTA West Corridor location will impact another critical road initiative—the York Region Mid York East-West Transportation Corridor. York Region has initiated a Study to *"investigate Highway 400 interchange alternatives and associated east-west road improvements in the corridor north of Teston Road and south of Highway 9. The corridors for consideration would include 18th, 17th, 16th and 15th Sideroads as well as King-Vaughan Line and Kirby Road."*

If the GTA West Corridor is built as proposed, it will use the last space for an interchange on Highway 400 south of King Road. There is speculation that York Region will attach one of its new east – west corridors to this interchange. We anticipate to do this the interchange would have to be designed to accommodate this traffic or a separate EA process completed. If a regional road is built to this new interchange it is our desire to see it ease the traffic congestion in King City by acting as a bypass.

To clarify the consequences of the above scenario, if the GTA West Corridor were to be located north of King Road it would pass through the environmentally significant Happy Valley Forest and the Oak Ridges Moraine-Greenbelt. York Region's proposed Mid York Corridors would be connected to the new Hwy 400 interchange and extended east to Hwy 404. If the corridor is moved north, the impacts to the Oak Ridges Moraine by these road projects is extensive and the cumulative impacts on the Oak Ridges Moraine should be considered in this study as both these corridors would pass lengthwise across the Oak Ridges Moraine/Greenbelt as would the extension of Hwy 427. Further, this type of infrastructure is needed to service large scale development and as no development areas in King Township are designated as urban growth centres moving the corridor north into King is not consistent with current provincial growth policies or local planning policies.

If the Province is truly committed to the long term protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine- Greenbelt, and committed to the Growth Plan then we believe it should disregard the attempts by Caledon and Vaughan to redirect these major traffic corridors into Greenbelt.

Sincerely,



Fiona Cowles, Chair
Concerned Citizens of King Township

Copies: Ministry of Transportation, Region of York, Township of King