

# The Regional Municipality of York

Regional Council  
Transportation Services  
February 25, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

## **GTA West Transportation Corridor Project Regional Response to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada**

### **1. Recommendations**

1. Council endorse the proposed response (Attachment 1) to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada as the Region's input to inform the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's analysis of the designation request for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project under the federal *Impact Assessment Act*.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ontario Minister of Transportation, the Regions of Peel and Halton and the local municipalities.

### **2. Summary**

On February 3, 2021, Ecojustice, on behalf of Environmental Defense, submitted a request to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada to designate the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project under the federal *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) (Attachment 2). On February 12, 2021, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (Agency) requested input from municipalities on the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project to inform the Agency's analysis of the designation request (Attachment 3). The Agency has requested municipal input by March 3, 2021.

#### Key Points:

- The GTA West Transportation Corridor Project supports York Region's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan (2016) and is an important component of servicing planned growth in the Region
- The Region has long-supported the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project and has been consulted by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation since the beginning of the provincial Individual Environmental Assessment (EA) process in 2007
- Under Provincial legislation the Individual Environmental Assessment process is the appropriate mechanism to address technical requirements in terms of environmental, social, economic or health needs as well as required consultation of all community stakeholders

- The Region, local municipalities and community stakeholders could be negatively impacted by prolonged processes that lead to continued uncertainty related to the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project

### 3. Background

#### **The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada has invited affected municipalities to provide input**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is planning a GTA West Transportation Corridor that will include a new provincial highway and protection for a future transitway. The proposed new highway will connect Highway 400, between Kirby Road and King-Vaughan Road in the east, to the Highway 401/407 interchange area in the west. The corridor extends through the municipalities of Vaughan, Caledon, Brampton and Halton Hills in the Regions of York, Peel and Halton.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada has invited affected municipalities to provide input on the GTA West Project to inform the Agency's analysis of the designation request submitted by Ecojustice, on behalf of Environmental Defense. In particular, the Agency is seeking input on:

- Whether any York Region requirements apply to the Project?
- Would any of those involve consultation with the public and Indigenous groups?
- What environmental, social, economic or health issues would those address?
- Whether the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is addressing the interests and issues of importance to York Region?

#### **The federal *Impact Assessment Act* regulates projects that are required to undergo a federal impact assessment process**

The *Impact Assessment Act* became law in 2019 and outlines two ways a project may be required to undergo a federal impact assessment process. The first is the project contains an activity that matches a description contained in the federal *Physical Activities Regulations* (Project List). The second is that a request be made to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to exercise their discretion to require a federal impact assessment process for a project that is not on the Project List, but due to the potential for the project to cause adverse effects on matters within federal jurisdiction, or adverse direct or incidental effects (due to a federal decision) or due to public concerns related to those effects. With the IAA in effect only since 2019, staff has not been able to identify any instance of the Minister exercising their discretion in this manner over a project that would otherwise only be regulated by a provincial environmental assessment process.

## 4. Analysis

### **Council has long-supported the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation began the terms of reference phase of the provincial Environmental Assessment process for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project in 2007 and has consulted the Region throughout the process. Staff have reported to Council at key milestones throughout the provincial EA process, and Council has consistently supported the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project as summarized below:

York Region Council [May 2007](#) resolved:

*The Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of the Environment be requested to expedite the GTA West Corridor and other environmental assessments that are needed to meet the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.*

York Region Council [March 2016](#) resolved:

*Council request that the Ministry of Transportation resume the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment and define the preferred alignment as soon as possible.*

York Region Council [June 2019](#) resolved:

*Council support a robust highway network to move people, goods and services and achieve provincial Growth Plan population and employment objectives in York Region and encourage:*

- a. The resumption of Environmental Assessment for GTA West Highway for near-term inclusion in the Southern Highways Program*
- b. The inclusion of the Highway 400-404 Connecting Link and the Highway 404 Extension to Highway 12 in the next Southern Highways Program*

York Region Council [January 2020](#) resolved:

*The Province of Ontario be advised that York Region supports the decision to resume the Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment and requests that the highway be constructed as soon as possible.*

### **The GTA West Transportation Corridor Project supports York Region's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan**

The York Region Official Plan 2010 describes how York Region plans to accommodate future growth and development while meeting the needs of existing residents and businesses in York Region. It provides directions and policies that guide economic, environmental and community planning decisions.

The GTA West highway is identified as a planned new transportation corridor in the York Region Official Plan ([Map 12 Street Network](#)) and included in policy 7.2.56:

*To work with the Province and local municipalities to plan and protect for the following corridors and facilities:*

- a. Highway 427 north to the GTA West Corridor*
- b. Highway 404 north beyond Ravenshoe Road*
- c. the Bradford Bypass (Highway 400-404 Link)*
- d. the GTA West Corridor*

The York Region Transportation Master Plan 2016 establishes the vision for transportation services, assesses existing transportation system performance, forecasts future travel demand and defines actions and policies to address road, transit and active transportation needs in York Region to 2041.

The GTA West Transportation Corridor Project is identified in the Transportation Master Plan as an integral component of the transportation network required to service York Region residents and businesses ([Map 8 - Proposed 2041 Road Network](#)).

## **The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has consulted the Region throughout the GTA West Project**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has consulted the Region throughout the planning for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project. At key milestones, staff have reported to Council highlighting issues for consideration in the provincial EA process, including those relating to alignment alternatives and interchange locations. References to previous Council reports for various GTA West project-related issues are referenced above.

The Region anticipates the current provincial EA process will continue to address environmental, social, economic and health issues as well as necessary public consultation to balance the needs of all community stakeholders.

## **Council recently received communications and deputations from residents raising concerns about the GTA West Project**

On [February 11, 2021](#), Council received 19 written communications and six deputations from residents raising concerns relating to various aspects of the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project. The Region anticipates the provincial EA process will recognize and address concerns raised by community stakeholders including those raised at the February 11, 2021 meeting.

## **5. Financial**

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

## 6. Local Impact

The Region and the local municipalities benefit from provincial investment in the highway network in the Greater Toronto Area. The planned GTA West Transportation Corridor Project is identified as an important component of the transportation network required to service the Region's residents and businesses.

## 7. Conclusion

This report seeks Council endorsement for staff to submit the proposed response to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to inform the Agency's analysis of the designation request under the federal *Impact Assessment Act* for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project.

Staff anticipate the current provincial Environmental Assessment process for the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project will continue to address issues raised by the Region, local municipalities and community stakeholders. The Region, local municipalities and community stakeholders could be negatively impacted by prolonged processes that lead to continued uncertainty related to the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project.

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For more information on this report, please contact Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 extension 75901. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



**Paul Jankowski**  
Commissioner of Transportation Services

Approved for Submission:



**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

February 24, 2021  
Attachments (3)  
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