

**Ministry of Transportation**

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March 17, 2021

Wayne Emmerson  
Chief Executive Officer and Head of Regional Council  
The Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street Newmarket,  
Ontario, L3Y 6Z1

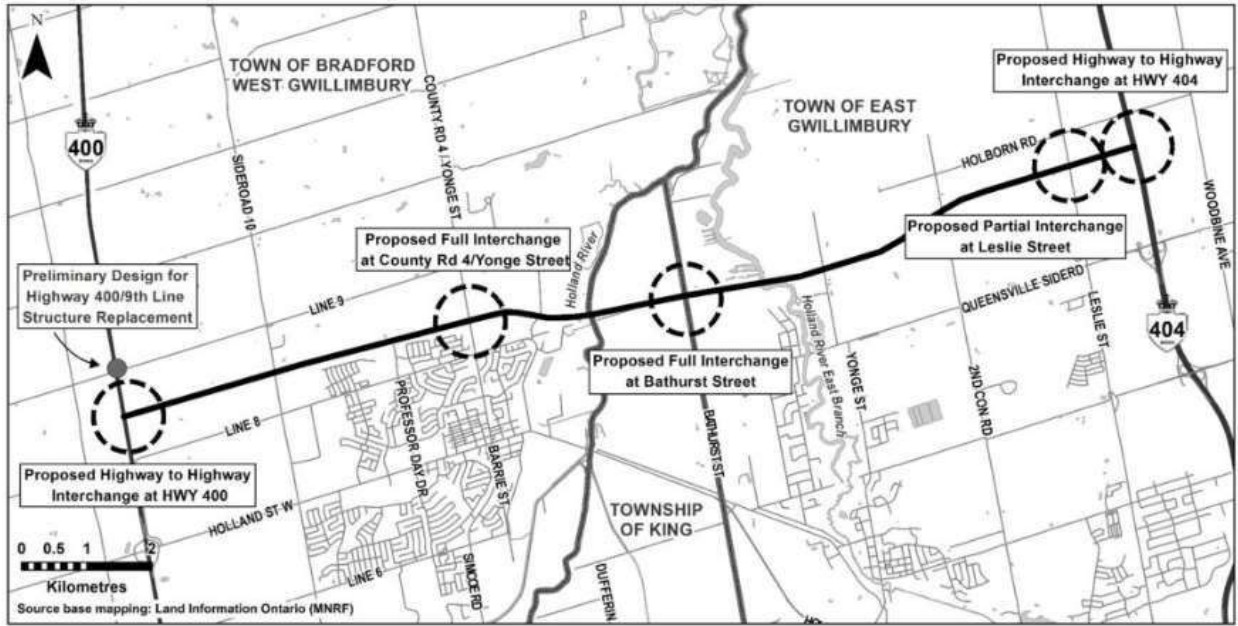
Dear Mr. Emmerson,

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is currently undertaking a Preliminary Design Environmental Assessment (EA) Update Study to advance the Bradford Bypass project, a proposed 16.2-kilometre controlled access freeway, connecting Highway 400 and Highway 404. This work is being undertaken to address both the current and future transportation needs in Simcoe County and the Regional Municipality of York. MTO would like to provide the following information to members of York Regional Council in advance of the next Regional Council Meeting, scheduled for March 18, 2021, for consideration in support of the project.

The current Preliminary Design/EA Update Study will refine the alignment that was recommended in the Bradford Bypass Route Planning Study, which received EA approval in 2002. The design will be updated in accordance with current MTO environmental, safety, engineering and design standards, practices and policies. Through this Preliminary Design/EA Update Study, further design refinements will be considered and evaluated and a preferred design alternative selected. Environmental technical updates will be undertaken to inform the Preliminary Design, all of which will conform to current provincial and federal environmental legislation. This is anticipated to be completed in late 2022.

**Bradford Bypass Project Details**

The proposed freeway will extend from Highway 400, between Lines 8 and 9 in Bradford West Gwillimbury, cross a small portion of King Township, and connect to Highway 404, between Queensville Sideroad and Holborn Road in East Gwillimbury. MTO previously completed a route planning study for the Bradford Bypass and the EA and Recommended Plan were approved in 2002 (see Figure 1 Key Map below).



**Figure 1 Key Map**

The study area is within the County of Simcoe (Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury) and the Regional Municipality of York (Township of King and Town of East Gwillimbury).

The project includes:

- A new freeway linking Highway 400 to Highway 404.
- Five interchanges along the proposed route at the following locations:
  - Highway 400 (provincial freeway)
  - Simcoe County Road 4 (former Highway 11)
  - York Regional Road 38 (Bathurst Street)
  - York Regional Road 12 (Leslie Street), partial interchange, and
  - Highway 404 (provincial freeway)
- Grade-separated crossings at the following locations:
  - 10 Sideroad (Middletown Road)
  - Artesian Industrial Parkway
  - CN Rail
  - Yonge Street, and
  - 2nd Concession Road
- Two crossings of the Holland River at the East and West branches.

**Relieving Traffic Congestion**

Even with all currently planned transportation and transit investments, road congestion will continue to increase across the GGH. For Ontarians in 2051, average travel speeds are expected to be 16 per cent slower when compared to 2016.

Simcoe County is expected to experience rapid population growth over the next 10 years, with the Regional Municipality of York growing to 1.79 million by 2041. Building the proposed Bradford Bypass is necessary to not only relieve congestion on existing east-west local roads and provide a northern freeway connection between Highway 400 and Highway 404 but also to address the expected travel demand in the area.

Congestion already costs Ontario billions in lost productivity, adds to the costs of goods and creates harmful carbon emissions. Ontario needs new infrastructure to help move people and goods or the region will quickly become overwhelmed.

The new freeway will relieve congestion on existing east-west local roads between Highway 400 and Highway 404 and support urban development in Simcoe County and York Region. It will also provide a northern freeway connection between Highway 400 and Highway 404. Motorists and trucks are anticipated to save up to 66 per cent in travel time compared to existing routes, resulting in 10 to 35 minutes of travel time saved each way.

### **Consultation**

As the Preliminary Design EA Update Study proceeds, MTO would like to reiterate its commitment to an open and transparent process that gives an opportunity to stakeholders to provide comments regarding the project and arrive at a solution that best balances the benefits and impacts for the local communities and users of the transportation system.

The Project Team has developed a comprehensive consultation program that provides stakeholders with access to study information in a timely manner and allows them to provide input and participate in a meaningful way. This will promote a cooperative and productive consultation environment that will maximize the outreach and engagement of study stakeholders. It includes Public Information Centres as well as meetings with municipal and agency staff, members of the public and Indigenous communities which have been taking place to date.

The Project Team will continue to engage with municipalities, environmental agencies, Indigenous communities, and other concerned stakeholders to identify principles and recommendations for mitigating the impacts of placing new or expanded provincial highways and transit corridors within areas of the Greenbelt, which forms a portion of the Bradford Bypass study area.

### **Environmental Impacts**

The Preliminary Design EA Update Study will include field investigations, impact assessment, mitigation, as well as environmental commitments, including those identified in the 2002 Route Planning EA Approval. A wide range of environmental discipline studies will be carried out as part of this project, as related to natural, socio-economic, cultural, and technical disciplines. All of the reports will be undertaken in

accordance with current provincial and federal legislative requirements, standards and best practices, including the *MTO Environmental Guides* and the *MTO Environmental Reference for Highway Design*. During the current Preliminary Design, 15 wide-ranging studies will be conducted. This will include: Agricultural Impact Assessment, Air Quality Impact Assessment, Archaeological Assessments (Stages 2,3, and 4 as required), Fish and Fish Habitat Existing Conditions and Impact Assessment Report, Noise and Vibration Impacts Assessment.

### **The Holland Marsh Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW)**

The Holland Marsh Wetland Complex extends beyond the Bradford Bypass corridor and consists of over 3,000 hectares (ha) of designated wetland area. Currently, the Bradford Bypass corridor will cross approximately 10.75 ha, which accounts for only 0.35 per cent of the entire PSW area.

As part of the Preliminary Design EA Update Study, the Project Team will carefully consider all impacts to wetland areas and continue to work with environmental agencies, municipalities and other concerned stakeholders to identify principles and recommendations for mitigating the impacts of placing new or expanded provincial highways within wetland areas. The Preliminary Design will consider minimizing impacts to these wetland areas through engineering refinements.

Some approaches to mitigation may include:

- surface water conveyance and management measures;
- strategic plantings to enhance the performance of proposed drainage and storm water management measures;
- erosion and sediment control measures to be implemented during construction;
- restricting construction-related activities to avoid sensitive periods for aquatic and wildlife species during life cycle stages;
- measures for spill control/containment/contingency plans; and
- a construction inspection and monitoring plan, including use of qualified personnel, reporting and response procedures.

### **The Greenbelt**

The *Greenbelt Act* was introduced in 2005 to help shape the future of the GGH. The province recognizes the importance of the Greenbelt to many Ontarians.

The Greenbelt Plan identifies where urbanization should not occur to protect agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands. The Greenbelt Plan permits infrastructure,

including highways, where it supports the significant growth and economic development expected in southern Ontario beyond the Greenbelt by providing connections among urban centres. New and expanded infrastructure proposed for the Greenbelt must meet certain environmental conditions that take into account the sensitive nature of Greenbelt lands.

The Greenbelt Plan recognizes that infrastructure is important to Ontarians' economic well-being, human health, and quality of life. The Bradford Bypass transportation corridor will put people to work, help Ontario's businesses remain competitive in an increasingly global marketplace, and make it easier for people to move around the GGH for work or leisure.

As part of the Preliminary Design, the project team will carefully consider all impacts and will continue to work with environmental agencies, municipalities and other concerned stakeholders to identify principles and recommendations for mitigating the impacts of placing new or expanded provincial highways within areas of the Greenbelt.

### **Agriculture**

The Project Team will be consulting with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), as well as local farming communities throughout the Preliminary Design, and will be undertaking an Agricultural Impact Assessment (or equivalent study) in accordance with OMAFRA requirements. This assessment will identify potential impacts to farmlands and agricultural operations. Further mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement measures related to agriculture are being considered during the Preliminary Design phase of the project in consultation with stakeholders.

### **Economic Impacts and Job Creation**

The Bradford Bypass project will generate direct and indirect economic benefits through creation of jobs and markets for supplies and equipment as well as other induced activities.

Transportation-related construction is vital to Ontario's economic recovery as a major driver of economic activity and a significant source of employment, especially in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Investment in highway infrastructure supports an estimated seven jobs per million dollars of spending, and \$0.71 of GDP per dollar spent. These impacts reflect direct and indirect impacts of construction across the economy.

As project progresses, the Project Team will continue to consult with municipalities and stakeholders to keep an open dialogue regarding the goals and objectives of the project. The province is following through on its promise to improve and invest in the province's transportation corridors to get people moving within the region, connect people to jobs, make life easier, and support a strong economy.

Please feel free to contact the Bradford Bypass Project Team directly at [projectteam@bradfordbypass.ca](mailto:projectteam@bradfordbypass.ca) or by phone at 1-877-247-6036 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time, and consideration for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jason White  
Manager, Engineering Program Delivery Central  
Transportation Infrastructure Management Division  
Ministry of Transportation

CC:

Jennifer Graham Harkness, ADM and Chief Engineer, Transportation Infrastructure Management, MTO

Steven McInnis, Director, Design and Engineering Branch, MTO

Becca Lane, Director Central Operations, MTO