

March 19, 2021

Ms. Anjala Puvananathan, Director
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
Ontario Region
600-55 York Street
Toronto ON M5J 1R7

Dear Ms. Puvananathan,

Re: Designation Request for the Proposed GTA West Project under the *Impact Assessment Act*

Thank you for your February 12, 2021 correspondence regarding the designation request submitted on February 3, 2021 by Ecojustice on behalf of Environmental Defense. The Ecojustice submission has requested the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada designate the proposed Ontario Greater Toronto Area (GTA) West Transportation Corridor Project under subsection 9(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act*.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is proposing a new GTA West Transportation Corridor which 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. In particular, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada 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 requirements address?
- Whether the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is addressing the interests and issues of importance to York Region?

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada has requested municipal responses no later than March 19, 2021.

York Region has long-supported the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation started the Terms of Reference phase of the Provincial EA process for the GTA West Project in 2006 and has consulted York Region throughout the process. York Region staff have reported to Council at key milestones throughout the Provincial EA process and York Region Council has consistently supported the GTA West Transportation Corridor Project as highlighted 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 Highway is integral to managing the movement of goods and people to support the magnitude of growth forecasted by the Province.

With a population of 1.2 million residents, the Regional Municipality of York is one of Canada's largest municipalities and the second largest business centre in Ontario. Ranked as Ontario's fastest growing large municipality, managing growth over the coming decades is important. In accordance with the Growth Plan, York Region is required to plan for Provincially-forecasted growth. York Region is forecast to reach approximately 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs by 2051, representing population growth of over 800,000 people and approximately 345,000 jobs.

The York Region Official Plan describes how York Region plans to accommodate future growth and development while meeting the needs of existing residents and businesses in the Region. The Regional Official Plan, currently under review to address 2051 population and employment, provides directions and policies that guide economic, environmental and community planning decisions.

The GTA West Project is identified as a planned 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 is identified as an integral component of the transportation network required to service York Region residents and businesses (Map 8 Proposed 2041 Road Network) and described in section 5.2.1 Provincial Infrastructure Plans:

GTA West: The GTA West highway corridor would extend from Highway 401 in Halton Region to Highway 400 in York Region. While Provincial route planning and Environmental Assessment work on the corridor has been put on hold, it remains an important project for York Region. Its benefits would include better access to employment areas in the City of Vaughan, alleviate pressure on east-west Regional roads and provide an alternate route to Highways 400 and 401. This TMP assumes that GTA West will be in place by 2041. [Note that the EA process was put on hold by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation in December 2015 during preparation of the York Region Transportation Master Plan 2016. The EA was restarted in June 2019],

Both York Region's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan were developed with extensive consultation, including the public, stakeholders, government agencies and Indigenous groups.

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

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation has consulted York Region throughout the planning for the GTA West Project. Through the Individual EA process, the highest level of provincial Environmental Assessment, York Region has been consulted and actively engaged. At key milestones, York Region staff have reported to Council, including highlighting issues or concerns for consideration in the Provincial EA process, including issues related to impacts of alignment alternatives and interchange locations. For example:

In January 2020, York Region Council requested the Ministry of Transportation assess, as part of the Environmental Assessment, a highway route that reduces impacts to existing and approved community areas in the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan area. In June 2020, the Ministry of Transportation consulted Regional staff on additional route options between Highway 50 and Highway 27 in the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan area. Taking into consideration input received on the draft highway alignment from various stakeholders, in August 2020, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation identified a preferred highway route. The identified preferred route included an improved alignment between Highway 50 and Highway 27, with less impact to the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan as compared to the original fall 2019 preliminary alignment.

The Provincial EA process provides for the highest level of environmental assessment and stakeholder consultation. York Region is satisfied with the current Provincial process and would be negatively impacted by a lengthy delay in constructing the Project which would be likely if the GTA West Project were designated for the purpose of commencing a new Federal EA process.

Specific Input to the Federal Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

Specific responses for the input questions posed by the Federal Impact Assessment Agency are summarized in the table below:

Impact Assessment Agency Question	Regional Response
<i>Whether any York Region requirements apply to the Project?</i>	The Region requires conformity with the Region's Official Plan as well as the 2016 Transportation Master Plan.
<i>Would any of these involve consultation with the public and Indigenous groups?</i>	The Region consulted extensively for the Official Plan and the Transportation Master Plan and would expect the Province to duly consult all stakeholders as required in the Provincial Individual Environmental Assessment process.
<i>What environmental, social, economic or health issues would those requirements address?</i>	The Region would expect the Provincial Individual Environmental Assessment process to address all relevant environmental, social, economic or health issues as raised by community stakeholders.
<i>Whether the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is addressing the interests and issues of importance to York Region?</i>	The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is addressing the interests and issues as identified by the Region including issues related to alignment alternatives and interchange locations.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Brian Titherington, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901.

Sincerely,

Paul Jankowski
Commissioner of Transportation Services

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