

Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group (GTAG) – Meeting #3 Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting	Thursday, November 14, 2019	Time 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Project Name	GTA West Transportation Corridor Route Planning and Environmental Assessment Study, Stage 2	
Location	Element Vaughan Southwest, Oak Room 6170 Highway 7, Vaughan, ON L4H 0R2	
Attendees	Lukasz Grobel, MTO Fahmi Choudhury, MTO Chris Barber, MTO Keith Cherneski, MTO Prashanth Selvakumar, MTO Jim Dowell, WSP Sandy Nairn, WSP Catherine Gentile, WSP Tim Sorochinsky, AECOM Britta Patkowski, AECOM Christine Green, AECOM Saeideh Rasouli, AECOM Glenn Pothier, GLPi	
	GTAG Members removed in accordance with the <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i>	
Distribution	Attendees, Regrets and Project Team	
Minutes By	Christine Green	

PLEASE NOTE: If this report does not agree with your records of the meeting, or if there are any omissions, please advise, otherwise we will assume the contents to be correct.

<p>1. Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G. Pothier (GLPi) welcomed all to the meeting and facilitated introductions. G. Pothier (GLPi) reviewed the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the GTAG and presented an overview of the minutes from GTAG Meeting #2.
<p>2. Study Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project Team provided an overview of the study, including a short history of the GTA West Study (chronology), updates on project activities since study suspension in December 2015 and updates to the study schedule.
<p>3. Debrief on Public Information Centre #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project Team presented a summary of what the Project Team heard from stakeholders at Public Information Centre #2 (PIC #2). The Project Team noted that there was a mixture of support and opposition for the draft Technically Preferred Route. Many stakeholders had route specific comments, however, most stakeholders were supportive of the multimodal transportation corridor.

- The Project Team also noted that they received a high number of advisory group application forms and Community Value Plan Team application forms.
- The Project Team discussed next steps in consultation, including upcoming municipal Council meetings and PIC #3.

4. Session 1: Overview of the evaluation of the short-listed route and interchange location alternatives, draft Technically Preferred Route and draft 2019 Focused Analysis Area (FAA)

- The Project Team presented the rationale for the draft Technically Preferred Route by section, as well as the rationale for the preferred interchange locations.
- The Project Team presented the draft 2019 FAA.
- The Project Team explained that the draft Technically Preferred Route and the draft 2019 FAA are not final and will be potentially revised following a review of stakeholder feedback collected since PIC #2. The Preferred Route and 2020 FAA are expected to be confirmed in Spring 2020.
- It was also noted that MTO will continue to review development applications within the green areas on the 2019 FAA map, but it is anticipated that properties in these areas will not be impacted by the GTA West multimodal transportation corridor.
- G. Pothier (GLPi) invited questions and general comments from the GTAG members before moving forward with the agenda. The following questions and comments were received:
 - **Comment:** I was involved with this planning group years ago and I'm not convinced that a new highway will achieve the objective of moving traffic away from Toronto. Toronto continues to sprawl and development is increasing in Barrie and Bradford.
 - **Question:** The technical studies that you are referencing for the evaluation are outdated. When will we be reviewing the environmental assessment in its entirety?
 - **Response:** The environmental assessment is currently ongoing. The study is currently in the planning and preliminary design phase, which represents an early stage of the overall process. The planning and preliminary design phase will culminate in an Environmental Assessment Report, which will be made available for public review. It is anticipated that the Final EA Report will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks by the end of 2022.
 - **Question:** Is this project officially going ahead? When is consultation being undertaken?
 - **Response:** The GTA West multimodal transportation corridor is vital transportation infrastructure that will help meet the projected growth in both population and employment identified in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Addressing transportation needs in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is essential to the competitiveness of our economy. The need for the GTA West Study remains and is reinforced by the Greater Golden Horseshoe population and employment growth forecasts, which identifies more people and jobs by 2041. Consultation is currently being undertaken (i.e. PICs, community workshops, advisory group meetings, community value plans and council presentations).
 - **Comment:** The Project Team has been consulting with municipalities (note: referring to the meetings with Municipal Advisory Group/Regulatory Agency Advisory Group/Municipal Executive Advisory Group) and I am concerned that

some of the personal interests of Municipal Officials have unduly influenced the results of the study. I view this as a conflict of interest and a breach of integrity for this project. It is not good optically and I believe the Project Team should initiate a review by the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario. What weight is given to elected officials when it comes to choosing the Technically Preferred Route? The Mayor of Caledon attended the last GTAG meeting, which I believe is a conflict of interest. There are elected council members that own significant areas of land within the Focused Analysis Area. The Chair of the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) own large areas of land in the study area and I am concerned that this has influenced the route evaluation process.

- **Response:** The MAG/RAAG is made up of municipal representatives, land use planners, active transportation planners, transportation planners and environmental representatives from the municipalities and agencies being impacted by our study. The Project Team can confirm, on record, that the elected officials previously noted are not members of the MAG/RAAG and have not had influence over the financial or realty aspects of the evaluation process for the Technically Preferred Route. We have completed a very detailed evaluation of every route alternative and that information is available in hard copy for review today or on our project website. We would note that as part of the assessment process, we look at types of land use, not property ownership. We are currently in the process of obtaining property owner information, and that was not used in the assessment and evaluation process. If you feel that we have missed something in our evaluation, please submit your comments or questions to the Project Team. We would also note that the Mayor of Caledon attended the previous GTAG meetings as a representative of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, not as an elected official. You also have every right to request a review by the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario but the Project Team does not believe the interests of any individual elected official has unduly influenced the process. The comments of staff and motions by Councils are reviewed and considered the same as the comments of any other stakeholder.

- **Comment:** Most of the land the previous stakeholder is referring to has been sold to residential developers.
- **Comment:** I was involved at the start of the Highway 407 extension project and I see many similarities between this study and the Highway 407 extension study. This project is moving very slowly; however, I understand these sessions are important for communities to voice their concerns.
- **Question:** We need to discuss the independent Advisory Panel Report, which recognized conformity issues with the environmental assessment process. The report also had several recommendations for the project moving forward. Will your presentation address this? The province is supposedly completing a Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) Transportation Plan. How does the GTA West Study align with that plan and Metrolinx's plans?
 - **Response:** The independent Advisory Panel Report is discussed as part of the chronology of the project. The need for the GTA West Study remains

and is strengthened by the GGH population and employment growth forecasts reflecting more people and jobs by 2041. The independent Advisory Panel Report will be considered as stakeholder feedback in the GTA West Study. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is also working to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation plan for the GGH. The goal of this plan is to provide a long-term vision for transportation in the GGH to 2051, and an integrated future multimodal transportation network for people and goods movement. The GTA West transportation corridor is part of that plan. If you have specific questions or require a contact person for The Metrolinx Plan, please contact our Project Team by phone, email or on the website, and we can send those details to you.

- **Comment:** I live in the Weston Road and Highway 400 area and I have heard opposition towards your draft Technically Preferred Route in Section 9 from my surrounding neighbours. People are unhappy with the impacts to the Greenbelt Area and proximity to our neighbourhood.
 - **Response:** The Project Team heard a mix of both opposition and support at PIC #2. We are presenting you with a summary of the feedback received, a much more detailed report of comments will be completed as part of the environmental assessment process. We are currently in the process of reviewing the draft Technically Preferred Route and, after considering the comments received, will confirm the Preferred Route.
- **Question:** Is a hydro corridor going to be constructed as well? Will it be constructed within the GTA West multimodal transportation corridor right-of-way?
 - **Response:** The Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines (ENDM) and the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) have initiated a separate transmission corridor identification study. The Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Identification Study will be undertaken to identify an appropriate corridor of land adjacent to the future GTA West multimodal transportation corridor. The environmental assessment for the GTA West Study is being undertaken from a highway and transportation perspective. We are sharing information with ENDM and IESO as required and they have also been consulting with us through the Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG). It is still too early in our study timeline to discuss specific construction locations.
- **Question:** Is this highway going to be tolled?
 - **Response:** No decision has been made at this time. Tolling is an implementation issue that will likely be determined at a later stage of this study or subsequent studies.
- **Comment:** The Project Team should consult with the trucking community to ensure that the highway will be used, especially if it will be tolled.
- **Question:** Has the environmental assessment considered climate change? What about offsetting pollution and carbon?
 - **Response:** During the evaluation of the short listed routes, there were climate change components, such as reviewing increases in Greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to air quality. Climate change is interwoven through numerous technical disciplines and we did integrate those into our route selection process.

- **Comment:** If the highway will be sold like Highway 407, the private developers who become owners of the highway should be paying for these consultation sessions.
- **Comment:** The Project Team should consider the environmental impacts and mitigation for construction, as well as operation and maintenance of the transportation corridor (i.e. an increase in carbon emissions, chlorides in the headwaters of the Humber River).
- **Comment:** I am very concerned with how the transportation corridor will impact the environment, specifically within the Humber Valley. Within our area (note: Weston Road and Highway 400), Humber Valley has one of the only forests remaining and there are only a few wetlands left. The environmental assessment should review the wildlife and wildlife habitat thoroughly to ensure impacts will be mitigated and habitat can be protected.
- **Question:** Can you clarify what is meant when you say “minimizes impacts to fish, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands...etc.” in your evaluation tables? The Federal Fisheries Act was updated in 2019, will those updates be considered?
 - **Response:** The term “minimizes” is relative to the alternative routes that were compared. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) will continue to be consulted on impacts and mitigation measures. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Canada will also be consulted and the Federal Fisheries Act will be applied where necessary.
- **Question:** Route S5-10 runs through a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) to the north of Highway 410. Could another route be chosen along the existing Highway 410 freeway to avoid the wetland?
 - **Response:** Existing Highway 410 has a tight curve and right-of-way constraints that are not suitable for a full highway expansion. If we were to update the existing Highway 410, we would have to regrade this section, which would impact the Valleywood neighbourhood and require several bridge replacements. We would also not be able to fit in a transitway along existing Highway 410. We took all of this into consideration along with potential impacts to PSWs.
- **Question:** The Project Team noted that property costs aren’t considered in the evaluation; however, the notes on the Section 1 slide say otherwise.
 - **Response:** The cost considerations in Section 1 refer to the construction cost of a new interchange, not the land acquisition costs. Although property costs were not considered directly, the amount of property required was taken into consideration, and in this section there were significant differences in amount of land required between alternatives.
- **Question:** Will you be following property lines to ensure segregation of agricultural lands does not occur?
 - **Response:** We are aware of these concerns for property owners. Once we start aligning the highway during preliminary design, we will attempt to reduce severances of agricultural land. These are details that will be confirmed later in the study.
- **Question:** How is Mayor Thompson’s vision for a Freight Village impacting this study?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: There has always been a desire to have an interchange at the Coleraine Drive location for goods movement and linkages onto the highway. ● Question: Does the corridor travel through the Cold Creek Conservation Area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: No, it will not directly impact the conservation area. The conservation area is located north of draft Technically Preferred Route S9-1. ● Question: Why is the City of Vaughan opposed to the route chosen for Section 8 (S8-3)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: The City of Vaughan has identified significant employment lands within the S8-3 corridor, which they are concerned about. However, they are otherwise supportive with the interchange location alternatives and the GTA West multimodal transportation corridor being constructed. ● Question: How will you consider Vaughan Council's opposition to the draft Technically Preferred Route in Section 8 (S8-3). Will you choose S8-1 instead? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: Council can have an opinion or a recommendation, but our Individual EA and our Project Team considers many factors (environmental, cultural, transportation, etc.) in our evaluation. We will attempt to work with municipal staff to mitigate their concerns, and their feedback will be considered with that of other stakeholders as we confirm the Preferred Route. ● Question: Are the lands outside of the draft 2019 FAA still frozen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: It is anticipated that in Spring 2020, the Preferred Route and 2020 FAA will be confirmed. Once confirmed, the lands outside of the 2020 FAA will be of reduced interest and development applications can proceed through the municipal planning process. MTO will continue to review development applications within the study area but it is anticipated that lands outside of the 2020 FAA will not be impacted by the GTA West multimodal transportation corridor. ● Comment: Please consider choosing Alternative Route S9-3 in Section 9. This route will reduce impacts to the environment, such as the old growth forests and wetlands. The S9-3 route would travel through an area that is already clear cut. Please reconsider this in your evaluation. ● Comment: The area has changed considerably since this study commenced in 2008. If the highway won't be constructed for another 10 years, you should consider a more northerly corridor instead. ● Question: Will you consider the impacts from using chlorides on the roadways? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Response: Yes, environmental impacts related to chlorides will be considered during preliminary and detail design.
<p>5. Session 2: Application of the <i>Guideline for Planning and Design of the GTA West Corridor Through the Greenbelt (2013)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WSP presented the key changes to the Greenbelt Act, in relation to the 2013 Guideline. ● WSP provided a summary of the Greenbelt Guideline recommendations. ● G. Pothier (GLPi) initiated a group activity, where members of the GTAG were asked to provide their feedback on the following four questions. The responses are listed below each question.

- **Question 1:** How, if at all, might the principles and approaches already identified in the 2013 Guideline be tweaked or refined to reflect changes to the Greenbelt Plan?
- **Question 1 Responses:**
 - The Crombie Report is missing from the principles and Guideline.
 - Do not water down the Greenbelt Guideline.
 - Climate change considerations.
 - Use a 'Wetland Treatment Train' approach to ensure mitigation of salt impacts.
 - Minimize interchanges and community development in the Greenbelt Lands (recommendation #25 from the *Guideline for Planning and Design of the GTA West Corridor Through the Greenbelt*).
 - For recommendation #8 from the *Guideline for Planning and Design of the GTA West Corridor Through the Greenbelt*, refer to prime agricultural lands, not just Classes 1-3.
- **Question 2:** On which principles would you place greatest emphasis as the study moves forward?
- **Question 2 Responses:**
 - Avoid the Greenbelt.
 - If the highway proceeds, protecting and preserving the Greenbelt from development.
- **Question 3:** What has changed or is changing that should inform the design of the Preferred Route?
- **Question 3 Responses:**
 - Existing traffic congestion, narrow roads, existing homes on roadside.
 - Increased noise.
 - Reflected heat from asphalt and climate change issues.
 - York Region's Official Plan and other Official Plans. York Region's Official Plan includes a cumulative effects assessment.
 - This will create the new urban boundary.
- **Question 4:** What are the hot button topics the Project Team will need to address? What are you hearing from stakeholders?
- **Question 4 Responses:**
 - The corridor will redistribute commuter traffic off of rural roads, which is positive.
 - Make sure the highway is not tolled.
 - The property acquisition process should be fair (i.e. consider land value and business revenue losses).
 - Will lands be taken out of the Greenbelt?
 - Focus on protecting natural areas and minimizing impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat.
 - Minimize watershed impacts and implement mitigation measures where there are impacts.
 - Build wildlife passages throughout the corridor.

6. Next Steps and Schedule

- The Project Team reviewed the next steps of the project. Next steps include:
 - Reviewing feedback received at PIC #2 and through the Advisory Group Meetings.
 - Confirming the Preferred Route and 2020 Focused Analysis Area.
 - Developing Community Value Plans.
 - Presenting the preliminary design of the Preferred Route at PIC #3.

7. Open Forum and Closing Remarks

- G. Pothier (GLPi) asked the GTAG if there were any further questions or comments for the Project Team
- **Question:** Where can we review the Agricultural Impact Study?
 - **Response:** The Project Team used a survey to obtain more detailed information about agricultural operations in the study area (The Agricultural Operations Survey). Survey results, which were summarized at PIC #2, were used to increase the Project Team’s understanding of potential impacts to agricultural lands, practices and operational linkages and helped to identify key factors in the evaluation of route and interchange location alternatives. The Agricultural Impact Study will be undertaken later in the study.
- **Question:** Can we be informed of when the other advisory groups are meeting so that we can be included on the invite list as an observer?
 - **Response:** Advisory group meetings (e.g. Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meetings) are open to the public for observing and non-members can be notified of the next meeting, if requested. We want to reiterate that only members of the advisory groups are welcome to participate in the discussions and group activities.
- G. Pothier (GLPi) and the Project Team provided closing remarks and thanked all participants for taking time to attend the meeting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.