

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – MAY 14, 2007

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE GTA WEST CORRIDOR INDIVIDUAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (ONTARIO)

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works and the Commissioner of Planning, recommend that:

1. The resolution of the Region of York's Planning and Economic Development Committee, contained in the report entitled "GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment" (Attachment No. 2), as adopted on May 2, 2007 be endorsed;
2. The Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal be advised that the City of Vaughan is willing to work in cooperation with the Province and the Region of York, and any affected municipalities, to advance the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment process concurrently with the preparation of the Region of York's Growth Management Review and the City's Consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031; and
3. This report be forwarded to the Regional Municipality of York for information purposes.

Economic Impact

There are no economic impacts resulting from the adoption of this report.

Communications Plan

The Ministry of Transportation's draft Terms of Reference contains a public consultation plan, which the Ministry of Transportation proposes to employ during the preparation of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Ministry of Transportation's request for comment, dated March 30, 2007, on the draft Terms of Reference for the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment

Background – Analysis and Options

Context

In 2006 the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's *Places to Grow – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* was approved. *Places to Grow* sets out policies for managing growth and development in the Greater Toronto Area and the Golden Horseshoe for the next thirty years. In conjunction with the *Greenbelt Plan*, the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* and the *Niagara Escarpment Plan*, *Places to Grow* will provide the broad planning vision for southern Ontario, to which all planning decisions will have to conform.

One of the objectives of *Places to Grow* is to provide for intensification within existing "Built-up Areas" with a focus on a number of "Urban Growth Centres". Also identified are a number of "Future Transportation Corridors", one of which is the GTA West Corridor. The corridor is shown conceptually in *Places to Grow* as running between Vaughan and the Guelph Area. The Built Up Areas and Growth Centres within the influence of the GTA West Corridor EA study area are Vaughan, Brampton, Milton, Georgetown and Guelph. To support these centres, the Ministry of Transportation is undertaking an Individual Environmental Assessment to ensure that the transportation network in this corridor can sustain the efficient movement of goods and people.

The draft Terms of Reference recognizes that both Regional and local municipalities have planning objectives regarding their future growth and development. It is noted that the EA study will need to take this information under consideration when evaluating potential transportation solutions. The Ministry Study Team has been advised of Council's February 12, 2007 decision to proceed with the preparation of the Vaughan Consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031.

This EA will play an important role in shaping Vaughan's future. If it is determined that major provincial transportation infrastructure, such as a 400 – series highway, is required to connect to Highway No. 400 it will affect both the Region of York's Growth Management Review process and the preparation of Vaughan's Consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031. The planning for such a facility may encumber Vaughan's "Whitebelt" area (as defined in *Places to Grow*) for a substantial period of time. This could result in delays in the preparation of secondary plans for this area, which will be part of the City's Official Plan Review process. It may take from three to ten years to obtain clarity on the actual degree of impact on the northern part of the city.

The Proponent of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment

The proponent of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment is the Ministry of Transportation (Ontario)

The Purpose of the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference provide the framework for the completion of the Individual Environmental Assessment study. Approval of the Terms of Reference by the Minister of the Environment is required by the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*. Generally, the Terms of Reference identify a problem and opportunity statement; outline the range and type of alternatives to be considered; describe the way in which alternatives will be generated and selected; and establish the stakeholder consultation process.

The Purpose of the Individual Environmental Assessment Study

The purpose of the EA study is to examine long-term transportation problems and opportunities and consider alternative solutions to provide better linkages between Urban Growth Centres, as shown in the *Places to Grow - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, in the GTA West Corridor. The focus is on developing an integrated system of transportation modes that includes public transit and a road/rail system, which includes good access to intermodal facilities, transit hubs and airports.

The Preliminary Study Area

The preliminary study area is shown on Attachment No. 1. The boundaries are:

- East: Highway No. 400 (Vaughan), between Highway 407 and Kirby Road;
- South: Highway 407 between Highway 400 west to the intersection of Highways 401 and 407; and west from the intersection of Highways 407 and 401

along Highway 401 to the intersection of Highway 401 and Highway 6 (Guelph);

- West: Highway 6 from Highway 401 to north of Guelph;
- North: West from the intersection of Kirby Road and Highway No. 400 between Nobleton and Bolton and then southwest, south of Caledon East to two concessions north of the west half of the City of Guelph.

The Problem Statement – Transportation

Two critical transportation problems have been identified. The first is the continuing population and employment growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in general and within the preliminary study area in particular, which is causing the capacity of the existing road network infrastructure to be exceeded.

The second is that the growth has resulted in traffic congestion, which continues to worsen. This is having a negative effect on the economy and the growth potential of the broader area. Congestion is being seen in peak periods on many sections of the provincial highway system and on many local and regional roads with substantial concern over the future availability of east-west network capacity in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Opportunities

The Urban Growth Centres identified in *Places to Grow* are important to the local, regional, provincial and national economies. Better linkages are required between the growing economic centres in the GTA, due to projected population and employment growth. Addressing the transportation issues will support economic development and assist in fulfilling the objectives of the *Places to Grow* plan.

The Study Process

a) Overview

The study will be prepared in accordance with the requirements for an Individual Environmental Assessment under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. The following steps are identified in the Terms of Reference.

- Preparation of Terms of Reference followed by their review and approval by the Ministry of the Environment;
- Preparation of the Individual Environmental Assessment will be undertaken in two stages:, which includes:

Stage 1:

Stage 1 will focus on selecting alternative ways of addressing the transportation problems and opportunities in the Preliminary Study Area. "Alternatives to the undertaking" are defined as different ways of addressing the existing and future deficiencies in the transportation network. This would include a "do nothing" option along with measures that would increase network capacity or reduce transportation demand or a combination of both. If the recommendation of Stage 1 is "do nothing" then no further action will be initiated. If the alternative is outside the jurisdiction of the MTO, it will be referred to the appropriate agencies for action. If the preferred alternative to the undertaking is within the jurisdiction of MTO, the process will move to Stage 2. A preferred alternative(s) will emerge

as a result of this stage. At this point a 400-series highway would be one of the options under consideration.

Stage 2:

Stage 2 will focus on following:

- Refining the study area;
 - Gathering information on existing environmental conditions;
 - Generating, refining and assessing the "Alternative Method(s)" of doing the undertaking. Alternative methods are defined as different ways of doing the same activity. For example: Where new transportation infrastructure is recommended this would typically include alternative locations and designs for the new facility;
 - The evaluation and selection of the preferred alternative;
 - Preparing the concept design for the preferred alternative;
 - Developing mitigation measures to address potential impacts and preparing the necessary environmental documentation.
- Submission of the Individual Environmental Assessment document to the Ministry of the Environment for review and approval;
 - Subsequent to the approval of the Individual EA, a Class Environmental Assessment for the design and construction of the project will be undertaken;
 - Obtain the required environmental clearances;
 - Begin construction of the project, subject to land acquisition and budget approval.

b) Timing for the Completion of the Terms of Reference and the EA Study

The draft Terms of Reference does not specify a timeframe for the completion of the EA Study. Ministry of Transportation Staff were able to provide the following guidance:

- Submission of the draft Terms of Reference to the Ministry of the Environment for Approval: **June 2007**;
- Approval of the Terms of Reference by the Minister of the Environment: **September – October 2007**;
- Completion of Stage 1: **2.5 years (to approximately 2010)** at which point it would be determined if there is a provincial project to carry on to a second stage. The extent to which the City will be impacted by any new provincial infrastructure may also be determined by the end of this phase;
- Completion of Stage 2: **2.0 to 3.0 years (to approximately 2013)** followed by submission of the EA to the Ministry of the Environment. If a new road is prescribed, the alignment would be defined at the end of this stage;
- If the approved EA specifies additions to the provincial road network the design phase will proceed by way of a Class EA: **(2.0 to 3.0 years, to approximately 2016)**;

At earliest, this would put the construction of the project a minimum of ten years away. This does not take into account the variations in time required to receive Ministerial approval for the EA, the resolution of any appeals and the completion of property acquisition. Provincial funding would also have to be approved.

Two critical points for Vaughan would be the ends of Stages 1 and 2. At the completion of Stage 1 there would be sufficient information to establish whether any new provincial infrastructure will be needed within Vaughan, and if so, the extent. The main question will be, whether a 400 – series highway will be required to connect to Highway No. 400 in Vaughan or an extended Highway No. 427 or if other measures are warranted.

If a new provincial highway within Vaughan is confirmed through Stage 1, the completion of the Stage 2 process would identify the alignment to a level of detail sufficient to proceed to secondary planning within the City's "Whitebelt" area. If this was the case, then there is the potential for a six to seven year delay in the preparation of secondary plans for the "Whitebelt" area west of Highway No. 400.

c) Public Consultation

Public Information Centres (PICs) were held on the draft Terms of Reference from April 16, 2007 through to April 24, 2007 at four locations throughout the study area. Locally, a PIC was held at LeJardin in Woodbridge (8440 Highway 27) on April 16. The Ministry of Transportation has set up a website (www.gta-west.com), to provide information to the public on the study. The information from the April 16 PIC can be downloaded from the website. It will operate throughout the life of the project.

The Terms of Reference sets out the public and stakeholder engagement strategy for the preparation of the Environmental Assessment. Public Information Centres will be one of the primary ways of keeping the public informed and seeking input. It provides for a total of six Public Consultation Centres, which are proposed at the following milestones:

Stage 1 (3 PICs)

- Review of Transportation Problems/Opportunities and Preliminary Analysis of the Alternatives;
- The Purpose and Rationale for the Undertaking, the detailed Alternatives to the Undertaking and the Evaluation Criteria;
- Identification and Selection of Alternatives to the Undertaking.

Stage 2 (3 PICs)

- Refinement of the Study Area, Identification of Study Area Features and Generation of Alternative Methods;
- Refinement, Assessment/Evaluation of Alternative Methods and Selection of a Preferred Alternative; and
- Concept Design and Mitigation measures for the Preferred Alternative.

Each round of consultation will include one PIC in York Region. MTO will publish newspaper advertisements at the time of study commencement for each round of PICs and when the EA is formally submitted. Locally, the notices will appear in the *Toronto Star*, the *Vaughan Citizen/York Region Business Times* and the *King Township Sentinel*. If circumstances warrant, follow-up meetings to the PICs may be arranged to address any of the issues raised.

The Terms of Reference also calls for the creation of a Citizens' Advisory Group. It will be made up of representatives of stakeholder groups, organizations and individuals from in and around the Preliminary Study Area. It will be a volunteer advisory group to the project team and the Ministry of Transportation. Its purpose is to provide a community

perspective and input on the direction and findings of the EA Study. Details and applications for membership are available on the project website. The Terms of Reference also indicate that MTO is committed to engaging other Citizen Advisory Committees that may be established by affected municipalities.

A Municipal Advisory Group has also been established. This group is technically focused and will review, comment and provide input on the environmental assessment process and the resulting documents. The purpose of this group is to foster two-way communications with the Study Team to ensure that municipal issues and local environmental conditions are considered and evaluation criteria are appropriately identified and weighted. Input will be sought at key milestones throughout the preparation of the Environmental Assessment. The City of Vaughan is represented on the Municipal Advisory Group.

Prior to submitting the Environmental Assessment to the Ministry of the Environment for approval, the draft EA will be available for comment for a minimum of 90 days.

d) Issues Resulting from the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment

The draft Terms of Reference provide the framework for the preparation of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment. The EA is necessitated by a shortage of road network capacity in the western half of the GTA and the need to put in place the infrastructure that is required to implement the *Places to Grow* plan.

The City of Vaughan is included in the preliminary study area and the EA might ultimately result in the city receiving a major element of provincial infrastructure, possibly a 400 – series Highway, which could extend from Highway No. 400 to the Guelph area. In the long-term this would have a major impact on the physical structure of the City. The alignment would affect the nature of the adjacent land uses, community form and design and the living environment. In addition, it could also have a major economic impact, which may be positive.

In the short-term it introduces a significant period of uncertainty for the City, which could last between three and ten years. Both the Region and the City are preparing growth management plans to the year 2031. The Vaughan Consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031 will essentially be the City's "build out" plan, which will ultimately result in an urban boundary expansion into the "Whitebelt" area as defined by the *Places to Grow* plan. Preliminary population and employment projections emerging from the Region of York confirm that the Whitebelt lands will be required for development if the provincial growth targets are to be met. There is a strong probability that the Whitebelt area at the north end of the City would be the location for new provincial transportation infrastructure.

It is noted that the City has adopted OPA No. 637 (the Highway 400 North Employment Lands – Teston Road to the King-Vaughan Line, between Weston Road and Jane Street), which designates the subject lands for employment uses. The amendment requires a Regional Official Plan Amendment. A Regional Public Hearing has been held but the amendment has not been adopted as yet. The GTA West EA will also impact the OPA No. 637 amendment area, particularly the portion between Highway No. 400 and Weston Road.

The Terms of Reference for the City's Official Plan review provides for the preparation of official plan policies and secondary plans for the Whitebelt area. Two issues will make it difficult to proceed to this level of detail in the preliminary study area, which is located to the west of Highway No. 400.

In the first instance, it is uncertain whether new provincial infrastructure will be required in this area. At the end of Stage 1 it will be known whether there is the need for a provincial facility in Vaughan and if so, its extent. The need for the undertaking and its description will be established during this phase. This will be documented in a *Transportation Planning and Needs Report*. It is expected that this analysis would include the potential traffic volumes that would be served by a link between Highway No. 400 and an extended Highway No. 427.

There are a number of potential outcomes. They could include: No connection to Highway No. 400; a truncated connection to an extended Highway No. 427; or the identification of other measures that may be implemented by the province or other agencies and governments, like the local and regional municipalities. In addition, environmental factors will play an important role in determining the type of improvements that may be appropriate. The north western quadrant of the city includes a major portion of the Greenbelt and the Humber River Valley. Based on information provided by Ministry Staff, it will take approximately two and a half years to complete Stage 1 of the EA Study.

Should Stage 1 be completed and the result indicates that a provincial highway is a preferred alternative (including a portion extending into Vaughan) then the process would move to Stage 2. The Stage 1 results may not have enough information to allow for detailed secondary planning. One of the products of the completion of Stage 2 would be the alignment of the new highway. Until this is provided it would be extremely difficult to move to the preparation of secondary plan policies for any portion of the Whitebelt that remains under study.

This situation is reminiscent of the Highway No. 427 Extension EA. Under these circumstances, the northerly Whitebelt area in Vaughan, west of Highway No. 400, will be constrained until it can be determined, first whether new provincial infrastructure is required and appropriate (Stage 1: 2.5 years +/-) and second, where the alignment would be located (Stage 2: 3 years +/-). The result could be that this section of the Whitebelt area may not be subject to secondary planning for six to seven years.

The impact of this Environmental Assessment could potentially extend to the West Vaughan Area. It is currently uncertain as to what the final alignment of Highway No. 427 will be and how far north it will go. If a 400 – series highway is the result of the GTA West Corridor exercise it may terminate at an extended Highway No. 427 or be an interchange on the route over to Highway No. 400. Such an interchange would be north of Major Mackenzie Drive. Both the Highway 427 and the GTA West Corridor EAs will need to mesh. This may have major effects on the municipal road pattern in the area, possibly impacting the alignment of Major Mackenzie Drive, which is now under evaluation as part of the Region of York's Western Vaughan Environmental Assessment.

The GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment process introduces an additional element of uncertainty into the future of the northern part of the city. In the worst case, the effect could be beyond a freeze in development in the Whitebelt area, it may prevent planning to the secondary plan level for up to seven or more years.

e) The Response from the Region of York

On May 2, 2007 the Region of York's Planning and Economic Development Committee considered a report on the draft Terms of Reference for the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment. The purpose of the report was to inform Regional Council of the initiation of the Environmental Assessment. The Regional Staff report forms Attachment No. 2 to this report. On May 2, 2007 the Committee adopted the following motion:

1. The Ministry of Transportation and the 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;
2. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal be advised of recommendation No. 1;
3. The Ministries of Transportation and Public Infrastructure Renewal be requested to work with York Region and other affected municipalities to investigate other processes and mechanisms that will allow the Province to plan and protect the GTA West Corridor within a two-year period.

The resolution requests that the Ministries of Transportation and Public Infrastructure Renewal work with the municipalities to plan and protect the GTA West Corridor within a two-year period. This timeframe would be acceptable to the City of Vaughan, as it corresponds to the prospective timelines that have been adopted for the Growth Management Strategy and the Official Plan Review. It would be appropriate for the City support this resolution.

f) Moving Forward with the EA and the Municipal Planning Processes

The *Places to Grow* plan provides the framework for the future of the GTA and the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It recognizes the need to provide the transportation infrastructure that will support a strong economy and a complementary urban structure, which will meet the challenges of our continuing growth. The GTA West Corridor EA study will help to fulfill this objective. However, there is also a need to plan for the future at the local level. Both the Region and the City have responded to the *Places to Grow* plan by starting comprehensive growth management reviews.

If the experience of the Highway No. 427 Extension is a guide, the planning for any new urban expansions, consistent with the *Places to Grow* plan may be substantially delayed by the GTA West Corridor EA Study. The resolution of the Region of York requests that a means be found, to plan for and protect any required corridor within a two-year timeframe. This would allow the Region and the City continue with their planning processes with a greater degree of certainty.

This approach should not be seen as being expedient. Over the next two years the Ministry of Transportation, the Region of York and the City of Vaughan will all be conducting studies and public consultation processes for their respective planning exercises. During this period the concurrent processes will generate an enormous information base, which would include existing land use, population and employment projections, transportation demand and servicing requirements and detailed environmental inventories. If this information is shared and the processes coordinated it could provide a powerful planning and decision-making tool that could support all three exercises. Achieving a level of coordination in the public consultation processes would also be worth considering, ensuring that the public is well informed.

This approach would present a unique opportunity for three levels of government to work together with their concurrent planning processes to achieve a common aim – the implementation of the *Places to Grow* plan. If properly structured a cooperative approach may result in a more timely process for determining the transportation needs and constraints, which would continue to meet or exceed the requirements for an Individual Environmental Assessment.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

Addressing the issues raised as a result of the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment is consistent with Vaughan Vision 2007's objectives as set out in Section 3 "Transportation and Transit Infrastructure and Section 4 "Planning and Managing Growth".

Regional Implications

The implications for the Region of York have been discussed in the report and are reflected in Attachment No. 2.

Conclusion

It should be the objective all parties to move ahead with a thorough and timely process that will optimize the quality of the concurrent Environmental Assessment and municipal planning processes. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal be advised that the City of Vaughan supports the Region's resolution. In addition, the Ministries should be advised that the City of Vaughan is willing to work with the Province, the Region of York and any other affected municipalities to advance the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment process, in conjunction with the preparation of the Region of York's Growth Management Review and the City's Consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031.

Attachments

1. Preliminary Study Area
2. Region of York Planning and Economic Development Committee Report: "GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment", May 2, 2007
3. Existing Land Use Policy Areas

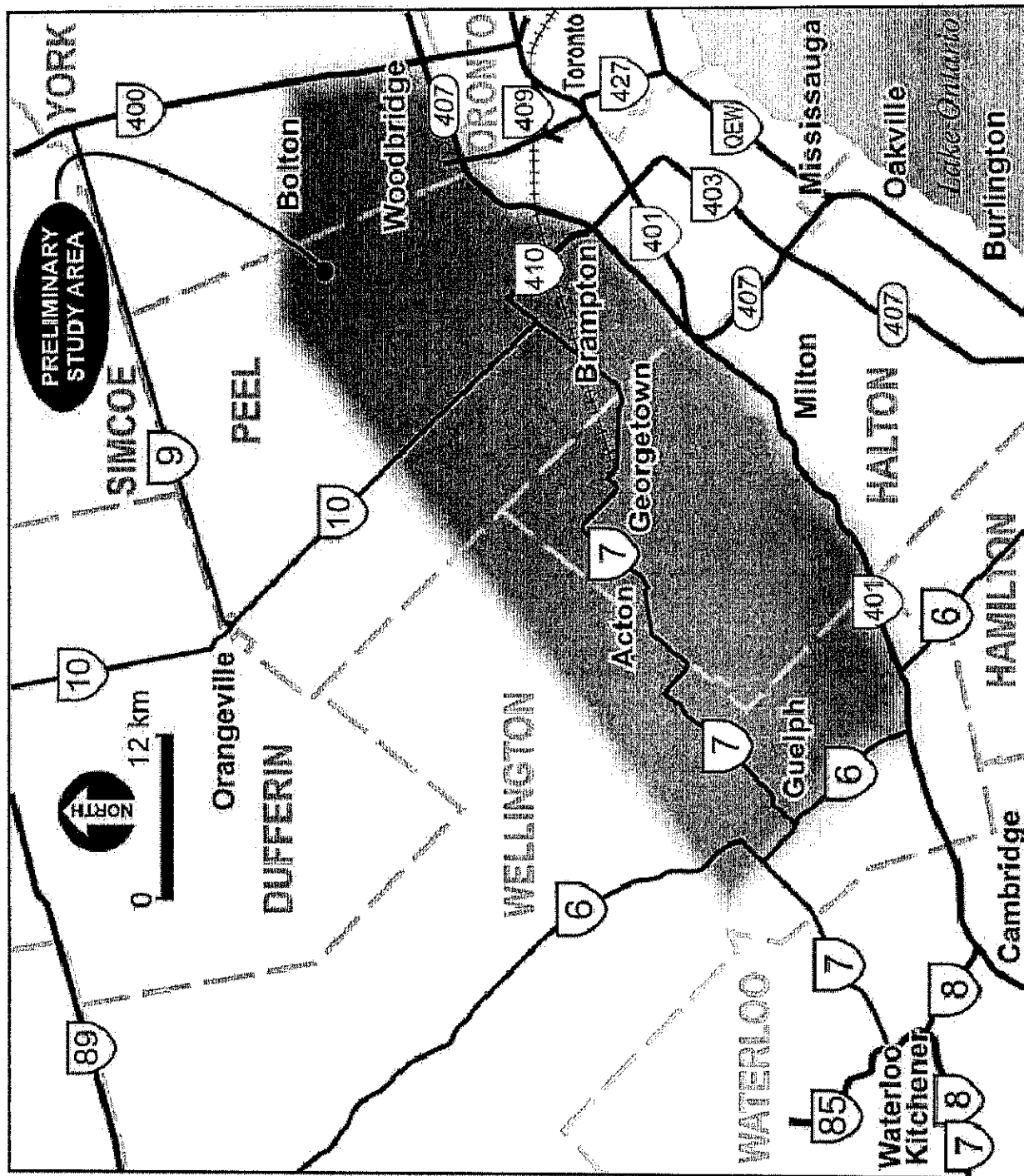
Report prepared by:

Roy McQuillin, Manager of Corporate Policy, ext. 8211

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Robinson, P. Eng.
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works

John Zipay
Commissioner of Planning



Attachment 1

Not to Scale

May 2, 2007



Preliminary Study Area

APPLICANT:
CITY OF VAUGHAN

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THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

Planning and Economic Development Committee
May 2, 2007
Report of the
Commissioner of Planning and Development Services

**GTA WEST TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. 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.
2. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal be advised of recommendation No.1.
3. The Ministries of Transportation and Public Infrastructure Renewal be requested to work with York Region and other affected municipalities to investigate other processes and mechanisms that will allow the Province to plan and protect the GTA West Corridor within a two-year period.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Regional Council on the initiation of the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) environmental assessment study of the GTA West Transportation Corridor. A presentation by the Ministry will be made at the May 2, 2007 Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting.

3. BACKGROUND

Schedule 6 of the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) (*Council Attachment 1*) as part of the Places to Grow Act provides the strategic highway network for future goods movement investment decisions in the GGH. In addition to showing future extensions of Highways 404 and 427, the Growth Plan also identifies a conceptual new transportation corridor extending from Guelph east into the City of Vaughan. This new corridor is shown as being south of the Oak Ridges Moraine within York Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The following sub-sections describe the status of the Provincial project and its impacts on other initiatives in York Region.

4.1 Status of the GTA West Corridor EA

The Province initiated this EA late in 2006 when it awarded a contract to McCormick Rankin to conduct the EA study. The EA study will follow the individual environmental assessment process for Provincial projects. As such, the Terms of Reference for the actual environmental assessment work must be developed and approved by the Ministry of the Environment.

A draft set of Terms of Reference for the study has been completed and circulated to affected stakeholders for comments. Staff from the Planning and Transportation and Works departments will be reviewing and commenting on it.

As part of the release of the draft set of Terms of Reference for the GTA West Corridor EA, MTO has conducted a series of public information centres with one meeting in Woodbridge in the City of Vaughan on April 18, 2007.

4.2 Other Provincial Highway Projects in York Region

There are a number of Provincial highway environmental assessment, design and construction projects that are on-going in York Region. They are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Provincial Highway Projects in York Region

| Highway | Project Description |
|-----------------------|---|
| GTA West Corridor | Environmental assessment study of new corridor from Vaughan to Guelph. |
| Highway 404 extension | Detailed design and construction of the segment from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road with target completion of 2012. |
| Highway 427 extension | Environmental assessment study for the segment from Highway 7 north to a point south of the Oak Ridges Moraine. |
| Highway 400 | Preliminary design for a widening from Teston Road to King Road potentially for HOV lanes. |
| Highway 404 | Construction of a northbound HOV lane from Highway 401 to the Beaver Creek, just north of Highway 7 to be opened in 2007. |

Of these projects, only the Highway 427 project will have a direct impact on the GTA West Corridor EA. The future Highway 427 extension could potentially be the eastern terminus of the GTA West Corridor. Correspondingly, the GTA West Corridor could potentially be the northern terminus of the Highway 427 extension. In either case, if both the GTA West Corridor and Highway 427 extension are approved, there will be an interchange between these two proposed highways.

4.3 Effect on Highway 400 North Employment Lands

The City of Vaughan has been taking steps to define land use designations for the land area between Weston Road and Jane Street from Teston Road to the northern boundary of the city. This area is called the Highway 400 North Employment Lands.

In the Growth Plan for the GGH, the east terminus of the conceptual GTA West Corridor is not clearly defined and appears to end at the vicinity of the CP Rail Intermodal Yard in Vaughan. However, with the support of York Region and due to the uncertain nature of the Highway 427 extension project, MTO has agreed to set the primary study area for the GTA West Corridor as extending from Highway 400 westward. That is, the future GTA West Corridor could potentially have an east terminus interchange with Highway 400.

As there are no opportunities south of Teston Road and to stay generally south of the Oak Ridges Moraine, potential locations for a new Highway 400 interchange can only be found in the area currently under study in the Highway 400 North Employment Lands. Therefore, staff are working with the City of Vaughan to protect a corridor for the GTA West Corridor and property for a new interchange with Highway 400 in the North Employment Lands.

4.4 Affected York Region Transportation Initiatives

York Region is conducting a Request for Proposal process to initiate the Western Vaughan individual environmental assessment study. This large IEA will cover an area between Highway 400 and Highway 50 from Highway 407 to Teston Road. It will examine north-south and east-west transportation needs given the elimination of the Pine Valley Drive extension through the Boyd Conservation Area.

In cooperation with the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton, a process is underway to better define the east-west arterial connections to the future Highway 427 extension. These arterial connections will be needed to support employment and residential lands proposed in Brampton and in Vaughan on both sides of the boundary. Loosely called the Highway 427/50 Area Network study, this effort is being coordinated with MTO's Highway 427 extension EA study.

Staff will work with MTO to ensure that the GTA West Corridor EA take into account these municipal studies with the objective of creating a comprehensive, effective and efficient transportation network in the western part of Vaughan.

4.5 Timelines

A typical Provincial highway EA will take approximately 8 years to complete. Given the growth environment in York Region and the Greater Toronto Area and the growth demands in York Region projected by the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, it would be difficult for York Region and the City of Vaughan to fend off pressures to develop the remaining lands in the northern parts of Vaughan over the next 8 years. The situation is similar in the Region of Peel.

What it means is that potentially more viable alignment alternatives may be eliminated for the GTA West Corridor simply because the current process being used is too long. A more reasonable timeframe is two years.

Therefore, in order to protect a reasonable swath of land for the GTA West Corridor in a more timely manner, changing the study design of the EA study or making use of other processes and mechanisms must be investigated.

A case in point is the Parkway Belt West, which houses Highway 407, a corridor for a future transitway and space for hydro and other utility corridors. By the time Highway 407 was built in 1996, development had reached points much further north. If the Province had followed an EA process to protect land for these facilities, it is very likely that the Parkway Belt would not be at the current location and be of the current width.

Changing the study design, for instance, to bring forward the environmental constraints mapping component would be a big step towards identifying land within the primary study area that can be released for development. Further, this work could be prioritised such that the areas experiencing the highest development pressures like the City of Vaughan are analysed first.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report does not have any direct financial impacts.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The identification and protection for this highway corridor will provide the framework on which development plans in the vicinity of this corridor in the City of Vaughan and King Township can be based.

Staff from the City of Vaughan and King Township are also involved in this study and have participated in project meetings.

7. CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Transportation has initiated an environmental assessment study to identify and protect for a transportation corridor, the GTA West Corridor, from Guelph east to the City of Vaughan. The eastern terminus of this new highway corridor is expected to be Highway 400. A draft set of Terms of Reference for the EA has been prepared and is under review. Staff is working with the Ministry to help expedite the project through coordination with York Region and City of Vaughan initiatives such as the Highway 400 North Employment Lands studies, the Western Vaughan transportation improvements IEA and the Highway 427/50 Area Network study. An earlier completion of the GTA West Corridor EA will facilitate an earlier definition of land use designations in the northern part of Vaughan.

Staff is recommending that MTO make changes to the study design or investigate alternative processes or mechanisms to allow the identification of land parcels within the primary study area not needed for the GTA West Corridor and, therefore, land parcels that can be released for development.

For more information on this report, please contact Loy Cheah, Manager, Transportation Planning at 905-830-4444 ext. 5024 or loy.cheah@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

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Commissioner of Planning and Development Services

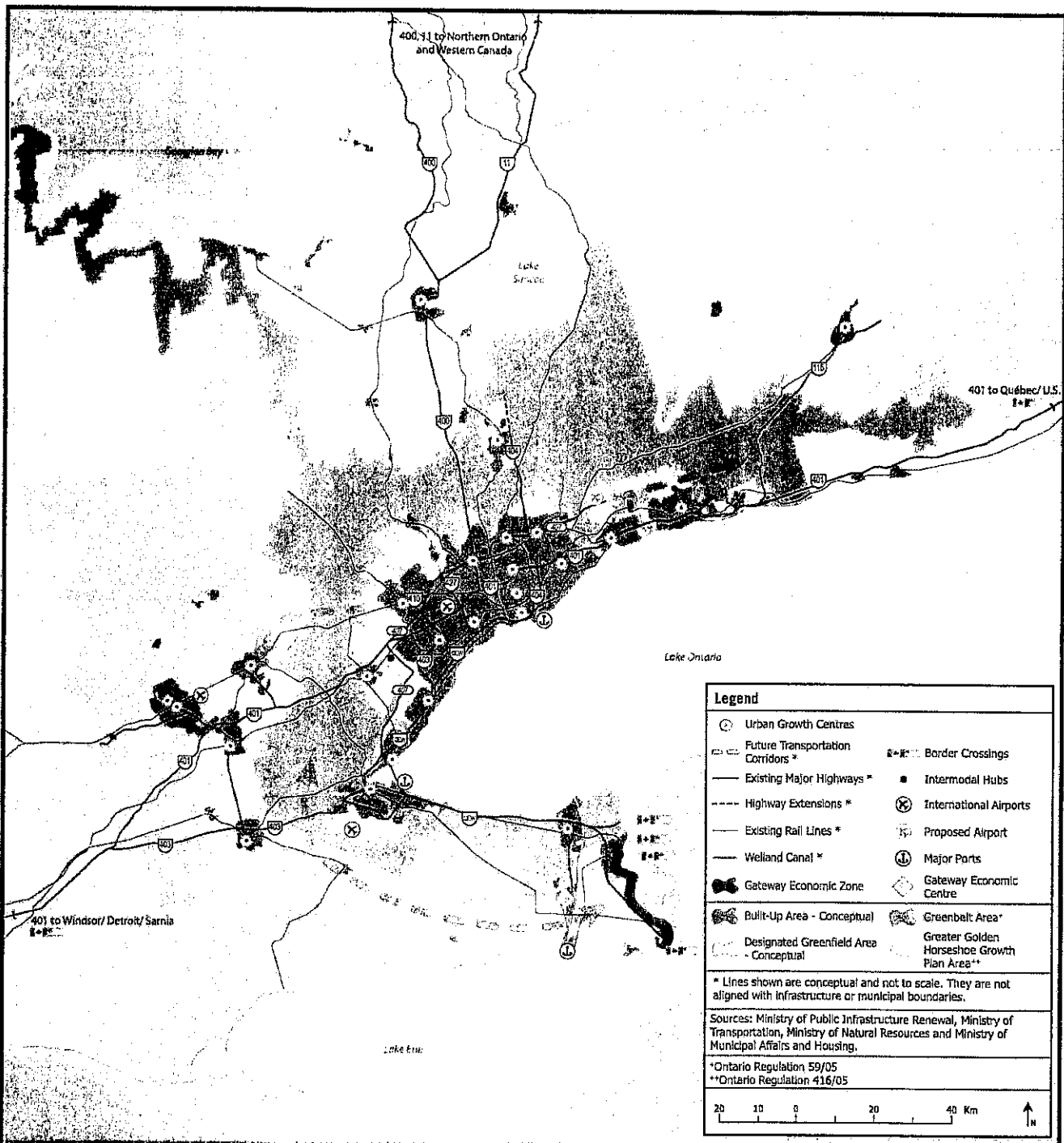
Michael R. Garrett
Chief Administrative Officer

April 19, 2007

Attachment: 1 – Schedule 6 of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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Version 4 - 2003-5-30



Legend

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|--|---|--|---|
| | Urban Growth Centres | | Border Crossings |
| | Future Transportation Corridors * | | Intermodal Hubs |
| | Existing Major Highways * | | International Airports |
| | Highway Extensions * | | Proposed Airport |
| | Existing Rail Lines * | | Major Ports |
| | Welland Canal * | | Gateway Economic Centre |
| | Gateway Economic Zone | | Bull-Up Area - Conceptual |
| | Designated Greenfield Area - Conceptual | | Greenbelt Area * |
| | | | Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan Area** |

* Lines shown are conceptual and not to scale. They are not aligned with infrastructure or municipal boundaries.

Sources: Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

*Ontario Regulation 59/05
**Ontario Regulation 416/05

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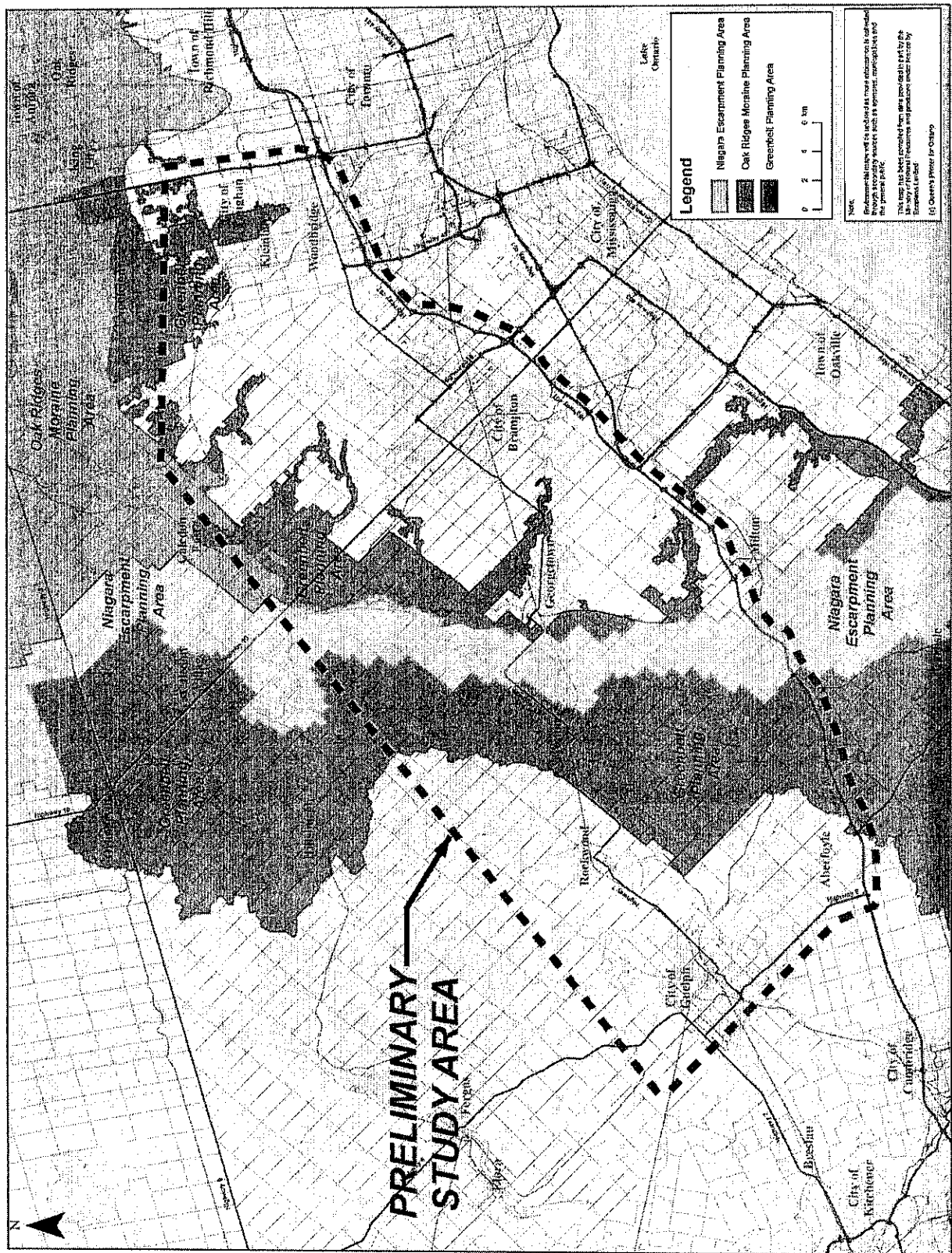


PLACES TO GROW

GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE 2006

**SCHEDULE 6
Moving Goods**

Note: The information displayed on this map is not to scale, does not accurately reflect approved land-use and planning boundaries, and may be out of date. For more information on precise boundaries, the appropriate municipality should be consulted. For more information on Greenbelt Area boundaries, the Greenbelt Plan 2005 should be consulted. The Province of Ontario assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequences of any use made of this map.



Legend

- Niagara Escarpment Planning Area
- Oak Ridges Moraine Planning Area
- Greenbelt Planning Area

0 2 4 6 km

NOTE:
 Boundary lines shown on this map are subject to change without notice. It is recommended that users verify the accuracy of the information shown on this map with the appropriate municipal authority.
 This map has been prepared from data provided by the City of Vaughan and its various departments and by the City of Mississauga and the City of Oakville.
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Existing Land Use Policy Areas

APPLICANT:
 CITY OF VAUGHAN

NA\Projects\GTA West Corridor Assessment\GTA Corridor Attachments



Attachment 3

Not to Scale

May 2, 2007