

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is working to provide for the efficient movement of people and goods within the context of the province's *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* as released in July 2006. The *Growth Plan* outlines a set of policies for managing growth and development and guiding planning decisions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe over the next 30 years. This broad based plan represents a planning "vision" for the Province of Ontario. As a part of this vision, the plan outlines a strategy for "Where and How to Grow", "Infrastructure to Support Growth", "Protecting What is Valuable", "Sub-Area Growth Strategies" and "Implementation". The *Growth Plan* requires that planning decisions made by the Province, municipalities and other authorities conform to the policies contained in the Plan.

The *Growth Plan* clearly supports improving access to inter-modal facilities to enhance goods movement and provide access to major employment areas. Consistent with this direction, MTO has initiated the formal Environmental Assessment process for the 427 Transportation Corridor, within the western part of the City of Vaughan and the eastern part of the City of Brampton.

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) study is to:

- Address existing and short-term transportation problems related to the current Highway 427 terminus, truck traffic accessibility to and from the CP Vaughan Intermodal Facility, and their impact on inter-regional traffic in the Peel-York boundary area;
- Identify and protect required property for any proposed transportation corridor and allow planned development to occur outside of the transportation corridor;
- Ensure that alternatives / preferred solution will not preclude or predetermine planning for the other future transportation corridors such as the GTA West corridor or a future extension of the transportation corridor northerly, if ever required.

The study area lies within the City of Vaughan, in the Region of York. The 427 Transportation Corridor Study is closely related to the following studies:

- Western Vaughan Individual Environmental Assessment: Stemming from the approved *Pine Valley Drive EA Terms of Reference* (as amended), York Region is undertaking this EA study to examine transportation improvements in Western Vaughan. This study will examine east-west connections to the 427 Transportation Corridor from the east;
- GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment: This MTO study is examining long-term transportation problems and opportunities to consider alternative solutions to provide better linkages to Urban Growth Centres within the GTA West Corridor Preliminary Study Area (e.g., Guelph, Milton, Brampton, Vaughan). The first step in

the study is the completion of an Environmental Assessment (EA) Terms of Reference, which was approved by the Minister of the Environment in March 2008. The EA is now underway. Stage 1 (the current focus of the EA) includes identifying transportation problems and opportunities, screening modal alternatives and assembling combinations, evaluating transportation system alternatives and selecting a preferred transportation strategy. If a new highway is identified as part of the preferred transportation strategy, the GTA West Corridor Study will consider interconnections with the 427 Transportation Corridor.

- Peel/Highway 427 Extension Area Transportation Master Plan (Region of Peel, City of Brampton and Town of Caledon): This Municipal Class EA study was completed in July 2009. The study reviewed future transportation network needs and improvements in northeast Brampton and southeast Caledon. It built upon previous municipal road studies for new/improved east-west road connections in the Peel/York boundary area. One of the objectives of the study was to identify potential municipal road connections to the 427 Transportation Corridor from the west;
- Region of Peel Official Plan Review: Region of Peel is currently updating the Official Plan to conform to the requirements of the Places to Grow Act. Policies and schedules will be updated to reflect the transportation needs to accommodate the growth targets set in the Places To Grow Growth Plan;
- York Region Official Plan: In December 2009, Council of the Regional Municipality of York adopted the York Region Official Plan (December 2009). The OP includes the objective of working with the Province and the local municipalities to expedite the planning, corridor protection and early construction of Highway 427 beyond Highway 7.
- York Region Transportation Master Plan Update: In November 2009, Council of the Regional Municipality of York adopted the York Region Transportation Master Plan Update (November 2009). The update was initiated to address future transportation needs in a sustainable and integrated manner to address new Provincial initiatives and additional growth in the Region. The update was also undertaken to further refine the transportation opportunities and challenges identified in the Region's 2002 Transportation Master Plan.
- City of Vaughan Growth Management Strategy: In response to the Provincial Places to Grow legislation and Growth Plan, the City of Vaughan is updating its growth management strategy including the Official Plan, and developing supportive Master Plans including a Transportation Master Plan.
- City of Vaughan Official Plan: The City of Vaughan is currently undertaking a three-year project to create a new Official Plan as part of the City's integrated Growth Management Strategy. It will address all elements of effective, sustainable and successful city-building while managing projected growth over the next 25 years. It is expected to be completed in September 2010.

- City of Vaughan Transportation Master Plan: The City of Vaughan's Transportation Master Plan is currently being carried out in coordination with the preparation of the City's new Official Plan. The Plan will require an examination of the City's existing transportation systems, and identification of required improvements for the future transportation network to effectively address the City's ultimate needs. The Plan will include a long-term vision for sustainable transportation, including initiatives to support the greater use of public transit, cycling and walking as alternative modes of travel.
- City of Brampton Official Plan: The City of Brampton is currently updating the Official Plan (OP) to conform with the requirements of the Places to Grow Act. The OP identifies a "Highway 427 & Arterial Network Corridor Protection Area" for all lands east of Clarkway Drive for the accommodation of the Highway 427 Extension and associated arterial road network;
- Brampton Transportation and Transit Master Plan Update: In 2004, the City of Brampton completed the Transportation and Transit Master Plan, outlining the strategy for accommodating travel demands for the planned City growth. The City is currently updating this study to reflect the transportation infrastructure needs for the growth reallocation as per the Places to Grow Act; and,
- Caledon Area Transportation Needs Study Update (2009): A joint undertaken by the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel to address additional transportation needs as a result of the provincial government's decision not to extend the Highway 427 to north of Highway 9 and the growth reallocation as per the Places to Grow Act.

1.2 STUDY PROCESS

1.2.1 Ontario Environmental Assessment Act

This EA was undertaken as an Individual Environmental Assessment under the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* (OEAA). It was conducted in accordance with the planning process documented in the *427 Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference* (ToR), which was approved by the Minister of the Environment in November 2005. The EA ToR provides the framework to guide the preparation of this EA.

As per the OEAA, the EA process is consistent with the requirements set out in Section 6.1 (2) of the OEAA. The EA considered every phase of the planning process including:

- The purpose for the Undertaking (**Chapter 4**);
- The process for selecting preferred alternatives to the undertaking (fundamentally different ways of addressing the problem) (**Chapter 4**);
- The process for selecting preferred alternative methods of carrying out the undertaking (route alternatives) (**Chapter 5**);

- Preferred Alternative/Preliminary Design including detailed impact assessment development of mitigation measures and commitments to carry out compliance monitoring (**Chapters 6 & 7**); and
- Preparation of an Environmental Assessment Report.

The EA process was completed in a systematic and comprehensive manner which included public and agency consultation throughout the process (Chapter 2). This EA Report documents the planning process undertaken to identify a preferred alternative.

This draft EA Report has been provided to Agencies and First Nations for review and will be made available for public review prior to formal submission to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) for an approval decision. Once the formal submission is made, MOE will coordinate a formal public and agency review and will consider all comments when making an approval decision.

1.2.2 Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

Throughout the planning process, MTO has worked with federal and provincial agencies in an effort to coordinate federal and provincial EA requirements. Meetings and discussions have occurred with various federal agencies throughout the planning process. To date, no formal CEAA triggers have been identified and therefore a Screening under CEAA is not required. A CEAA project description was submitted in July 2007.

The following summarize the various CEAA triggers and provides an explanation as to why CEAA does not apply to this project:

- Need for Federal Government Financial Support: None
- Federal Government Lands Involved (including First Nations lands): None.
- Federal Permits / Authorization Possibly Required: None. The following outlines a review of the most applicable potential federal approvals:
 - *Fisheries Act* Authorization – Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): The project crosses numerous watercourses. Watercourse crossings have been reviewed in accordance with the MTO/DFO/OMNR Fisheries Protocol (2006) and it has been determined, based on the preliminary design, that Fisheries Act authorization is not required. This will be reviewed during Detail Design based on final design details.
 - *National Energy Board Act* – National Energy Board: The proposed Highway 427 Extension alignment is not anticipated to impact the TransCanada Pipeline's natural gas pipeline that is located north of Major Mackenzie Drive. However, as noted in Section 6.2.5, this study also includes the identification and property protection of a 60 m right-of-way (ROW) for a future transitway and transitway stations including conceptual transitway station access roads. The proposed

transitway ROW north of Major Mackenzie Drive would cross the pipeline, which is shown on Plate 5 of Exhibit 6-3. If the province decides to move forward with the planning and design of the transitway, a separate Environmental Assessment (EA) study will need to be undertaken and TransCanada Pipelines will be consulted further at that time. It should be noted that, based on correspondence with TransCanada Pipeline to date, NEB approval would not be required for this crossing (approval from the Pipeline Company will).

- *Navigable Waters Protection Act* – Transport Canada: Transport Canada (TC) has determined that the Rainbow Creek and West Robinson Creek are not considered navigable (see Appendix C for correspondence).
- *Canadian Transportation Act* – Canadian Transportation Agency: No approvals for railway crossing are anticipated as the proposed conceptual design has been developed in consultation with CPR.

1.3 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE UNDERTAKING

The recommended Highway 427 Extension is from Highway 7 to Major Mackenzie Drive and is 6.6 km in total length. New interchanges will be constructed at Langstaff Road, Rutherford Road and Major Mackenzie Drive. The recommended extension is 6 lanes from Highway 7 to Rutherford Road and 4 lanes from Rutherford Road to Major Mackenzie Drive. The recommended extension also includes the provision of median HOV lanes in each direction and a carpool lot at the Rutherford Road Interchange. The extension includes 5 road crossing structures and 4 creek crossing structures. Features of the recommended route are outlined in **Chapter 6**.

In addition, the 427 Transportation Corridor includes the property protection of a future transitway in a 60 m right-of-way and will not preclude future extension of Highway 427.