

A Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting was held regarding the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and EA Study on September 20th, 2007 at the Casablanca Winery Inn from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Attendance

A total of 48 members of the CAG attended the meeting; 34 chose to sign in.

Representatives from the Project Team included the Ministry of Transportation (Terry Hilditch, and Darlene Proudfoot), URS, MRC and Ecoplans. An independent facilitator from Lura Consulting, Sally Leppard, facilitated the meeting.

Purpose

This was the first full CAG meeting (a preliminary CAG meeting was held in June 2007). The purpose of this meeting was to introduce and provide background to the study for new CAG members, and present the following:

- The Phase 1 study process;
- An overview of the first round of consultation;
- Draft documentation (Study Plan, Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints, and Overview of Transportation and Socio-Economic Conditions);
- Process for identifying transportation problems and opportunities; and
- Next steps.

In addition, the following elements of CAG logistics were discussed:

- Meeting record from the preliminary CAG meeting held in June 2007;
- The Draft CAG Charter; and
- CAG Work Planning (i.e., roles, responsibilities, meeting schedule and general logistics).

Question and answers were responded to throughout the meeting and after the presentation.

Discussion Highlights:

Breakout discussions were conducted. Participants were asked to respond to three questions and report their findings. Highlights of those discussions are summarized in point-form below. (Note: Consensus on the responses to each question was not obtained.)

1. Do you have any comment on the identification of Problems and Opportunities

- Focus on Global Warming and Kyoto initiatives
- There are opportunities for technological advancement in efficient transportation
- Look outside of study area for information
- Opportunity for multi-modal transportation system
- Opportunity to enhance transit system (e.g., GO Train service)
- Opportunity to determine priorities 20-30 years from now
- Link to other plans (e.g., Growth Plan, GTTA project, GTA West)

2. Additional comments on the Environmental and Transportation / Economic Overview reports? Are there any important features or information that you feel is missing?

- Many participants requested an additional two weeks to review the above reports
- Some tables reported that the environmental overview is very comprehensive; others indicated that it is based on secondary data, and some municipalities may not have up-to-date environmental information. This is particularly the case in Hamilton. These gaps should be closed.
- Obtaining primary data should be a priority for this study
- Review similar studies conducted worldwide, what can we learn, what are the Best Practices
- The principles should be modified to identify areas that should be excluded from consideration (specifically in regard to Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the Niagara Escarpment)
- Suggest that integrated transportation modes are reviewed, specifically in regard to transferring from one mode to another
- Ensure trade and goods movement are addressed

3. What are your views on the Alternatives and their Evaluation? In particular, the process for assessing area transportation system alternatives, and the methodology for their evaluation.

- Cost
- Sustainability
- Air Quality needs to be assessed
- Review comparative studies completed by other regions and institutions
- Suggest that a Niagara-GTA “by pass” option is included.
- Suggest that all alternatives are evaluated
- The Phase 1: Transportation Needs Assessment Process seems comprehensive, but that the evaluation criteria approach needs further discussion and study
- Concern that roads and highways are still the principal solution being considered by MTO
- Ensure that the study includes jurisdictions responsible for other modes of transportation (e.g. rail)

Additional Comments

Additional comments raised by CAG members concerning the study and CAG work planning include:

- Need for adequate time to review study reports
- Suggestion to provide executive summaries of all documents prepared.
- Consider briefing sessions on study materials / findings
- Materials provided to the CAG should have a reference number / indexing
- Need for a briefing document on the scope and assumptions contained in the forecasting model and the overall process for identifying transportation problems and opportunities.
- Provide CAG members with a summary of each of the stakeholder groups input.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.