

NIAGARA TO GTA CORRIDOR EA – Phase 1 Community Advisory Group Meeting # 5 Short Summary Report

The fifth **Community Advisory Group (CAG)** meeting regarding the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study was held on January 22, 2009 at the Casablanca Winery Inn from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Purpose:

The purpose of the meeting was to provide:

- (a) a study update;
- (b) an overview of existing and future Transportation Problems and Opportunities; and
- (c) the key features and format of the upcoming round of Public Information Centres.

Attendance:

A total of 29 members of the CAG attended the meeting. Regrets were received from 4 members.

Representatives from the Project Study Team included the Ministry of Transportation (John Slobodzian, Terry Hilditch, George Ivanoff.), URS and MRC. A team of independent facilitators from Lura Consulting - Sally Leppard, Liz Nield, Barry Randall and Jason Diceman facilitated the meeting.

Presentation Highlights:

John Slobodzian began the meeting with an update on: the study progress; recent events and meetings, and Metrolinx's Regional Transit Plan (RTP). Jack Thompson of MRC provided an overview of the transportation problems in the NGTA corridor- specific to goods, commuters and tourism; and how the "community", "environment" and "economy" are affected as a result. The presentation ended with a discussion of the transportation "opportunities" (aka goals); an overview of the PIC format and "next steps" highlights.

Facilitated Round Tables:

CAG members formed five (5) groups to discuss the transportation problems and opportunities presented. Highlights of those discussions are provided in point-form below. (A more detailed report will be available in the meeting minutes.)

Problem Statements

General

- More detail is required to fully understand the problem statements (e.g., future presentations, PIC display material, and P&O Report)
- The extent that "all trips" have been accounted for is unclear
- Growth and land use planning (i.e., "strong communities") must be integrated with transportation planning
- The "unpredictability" of future trends must be considered

- “Environmental” problems go beyond congestion; other factors should be considered (e.g., smog, number and type of vehicles, global warming etc.)
- The basis of the modelling and forecasting “assumptions” (i.e., current or future) are unclear
- Need to discuss trends and forecasts with more detail and provide information sources
- Need to continue to explain why Growth Plan is driving need for transportation infrastructure

Specific:

1. Goods

Truck

- Congestion is the biggest problem
- Too many trucks; use of other modes (e.g., rail, marine) is limited
- 407 is underutilized
- Existing infrastructure has deteriorated

Rail

- Lack of connections between rail and road (i.e., intermodal terminals)
- Lack of rail infrastructure; need for a “rail revolution” i.e., transportation system to consider and protect for rail services

Marine

- Marine is too slow
- Depths of watercourses should be addressed

2. Commuters

Road

- Some existing systems are underutilized (e.g. 407 toll highway); others are too busy
- Conflicting modes (e.g., trucks vs. cars)

Transit

- Lack of focus on impacts to people and communities (e.g. accessibility, frequency, ease of use, etc.)
- Cost/frequency of service could be a deterrent
- Rail lines that have been converted to trails can be reclaimed

3. Tourism

- Problems that apply to goods movement/commuters also apply to tourism
- Lack of “traveler information systems” for tourists (e.g., information kiosks, international symbols, etc.)
- Lack of multimodal and interregional connections
- Lack of priority on tourist systems; current systems are industry focused

- If system is improved for “goods and people movement”, then tourism problems are also solved

Opportunities

- Build on the Metrolinx concept of a regional system
- Maximize existing infrastructure (e.g., 407)
- Create a double tiered transportation system – i.e., separate through traffic (i.e., long distance) and local traffic (i.e., short distance)
- Minimizing environmental impacts is not enough – more focus on “enhancements” to the environment is needed
- Reduce emissions
- Economic opportunities need to be fleshed out and explained further

Feedback for upcoming PICs

- Direction and station titles will help avoid confusion when moving through the PIC venue
- “Problem statements” need to be more detailed
- Location of video should be considered (i.e., too close to entrance may be distracting)
- In addition to the PICs, consider soliciting “youth” at career fairs, etc.
- Suggest adopting Metrolinx’s approach of encouraging people to think about what can be implemented for “x” amount of money.

Other Business, Next Meeting and Adjourn:

Youth CAG

The project team is working with University and Colleges to encourage youth involvement.

Presentation

The suggestion of a “Niagara International Transportation Technology Coalition (NITTEC) presentation (i.e., border crossing management and information) at a future CAG meeting was favourably received.

Next Meeting

The next CAG meeting has not been scheduled; likely spring/summer 2009. It will focus on the *Problems and Opportunities Report* and next steps.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.