

Session: **Public Information Centre #1 Summary**
Location: **Burlington - Holiday Inn
Hotel and Conference Centre**

Date: **June 18, 2007**
Time: **4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Introduction

The last of three events for the first round of Public Information Centres (PICs) for the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study was held on Monday June 18, 2007 at the Holiday Inn (Hotel and Conference Centre) in Burlington. The format of the PICs was an informal drop-in centre (open house) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Representatives of the Ministry of Transportation (John Slobodzian, Terry Hilditch, Darlene Proudfoot, Robin Ashdown, Sam Di Felice, Frank Williams, Frank Pravitz and Will Mackenzie), URS Canada Inc. (Paul Hudspith, Patrick Puccini, Tyler Drygas, Margie Gonzalez, and Holly Wright), MRC (Jack Thompson), and Ecoplans (Sandy Nairn) staffed the PIC.

Purpose of the PIC

The purpose of the PIC was to present and obtain feedback on the findings of the initial data gathering exercise that has been undertaken to obtain information about existing environmental and transportation conditions within the Preliminary Study Area. In addition, the Project Team presented key aspects of the Study Plan that has been developed for this study. These aspects included the study background, the EA process that is being followed, the policy context for the study and the proposed consultation program. The PIC also included an opportunity for attendees to apply for membership on the project Community Advisory Group (CAG).

The information presented at the PIC were grouped under the following headings:

1. The Environment
2. Past Trends
3. Our Challenge
4. The Process
5. Community Advisory Group

Attendance and Comments

A total of 88 members of the public chose to sign the visitor's register for the PIC. Several additional members of the public attended the PIC but chose not to sign the register. In addition to verbal comments, the Project Team encouraged visitors to express, in writing, all suggestions, comments or concerns that they had regarding the information presented. Twelve written comments were received at the PIC. Additional comment sheets are expected (via fax, mail) in the coming weeks.

Summary of What We Heard

The following summarizes the comments received verbally and in writing at this event:

Verbal Comments

Information/Materials Presented at the PIC

- Video and displays were well received and provided appropriate information for this stage of the project.
- Some concern regarding the size of some displays (i.e. environmental conditions mapping). Suggest larger format.

- Concern regarding focus of displays on roads/highways and not enough on public transit.

Study Process & Timing

- Clarification on Phases 1 and 2 of this study.
- Various questions about the overall study process and timing.
- Inquiries regarding the management structure of the Project Team.
- Inquiries on how the forecasting work will be undertaken.
- Clarifications regarding this study relative to the corridor identified as part of the former Mid-Peninsula Corridor study.
- Skepticism on the outcome of this study given the previous “Mid-Pen process”.
- The Province must plan for future growth.
- Inquiries about the relationship of the Growth Plan to this study.

Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities

- The process is off to a good start (i.e. multi-modal approach regarding transportation solutions).
- Need for additional public transit in the Niagara area.
- Suggestion to use existing rail corridors (e.g. South Shore Rail Line, Hamilton/Guelph Rail Line).
- Suggestion that the Welland Canal be used more often for short haul trips.
- Inquiries on how truck traffic will be modeled?

Reference Documentation

- Inquiries for hard copies of reports (e.g. ToR, Overview Reports, Study Plan).

Consultation & Involvement

- Preference for question and answer sessions instead of the open house format.
- Preference for the open house format.
- Inquiries about the necessity of a Community Advisory Group (i.e. is it mandatory to run an advisory group?).
- Suggestion to contact other organizations (e.g. Ontario Sand & Stone Gravel Association, Port of Hamilton).

Environmental Concerns & Suggestions

- Concern regarding missing information on the environment and economics.
- Need to fully address air quality issues.
- Concern as to how global warming will be factored in.
- Suggestion for a greenway instead of a highway.
- Suggestion to examine how transportation issues have been addressed in Europe.

Cost Concerns

- Concern about costs.
- Inquiries as to whether the outcome of the project will be privatized (similar to the 407).

Written Comments

Information/Materials Presented at the PIC

- The environmental maps are impressive and show the wealth of natural features within the study area.
- The environmental maps are missing the Red Hill Valley Parkway in Hamilton.
- Environmental information presented does not include projected impacts of climate change and peak oil.
- Difficult to dispute the transportation and socio-economic trends and figures.
- Inquiry as to whether the trends will continue to escalate if the Canadian dollar stays high.
- Suggestion to display more information on other modes and focus less on the automobile/truck.
- Issues are well presented and displayed (e.g. good spacing and size).
- Graphs, maps, and charts are detailed and facilitate discussion with staff.
- Information is slightly overwhelming, but that is inevitable at this stage in the study.
- Minimize technical jargon.
- Inquiry whether the GTA West and NGTA studies should be connected.

Environmental Concerns & Suggestions

- Air and noise pollution should be displayed.
- Important to preserve green space and natural corridors.
- Concern regarding the impact of road congestion on public health and well-being (i.e. air pollution).
- Requests for roll plan of wooded areas.
- The preservation of interior woodlands is critical.
- Suggestion to incorporate the global impacts of human activity.

Agriculture & Food Concerns & Suggestions

- Importance of local food sources (preserve all the category 1, 2, and 3 agricultural lands).
- Emphasis should be placed on self-sustained communities with local food supply and employment.

Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities

- Skepticism as to whether all modes are being considered equally.
- Other modes instead of highways are cheaper to build and maintain (e.g. monorail along abandoned rail corridors).
- Pleased with the new emphasis on transportation systems management and alternative modes.
- Remove or reduce truck traffic (particularly on the QEW):
 - Concern over public safety on existing roads
 - Alternative routes or dedicated lanes for trucks
 - Divert goods to other modes (e.g. rail, marine)
- Provide a truck only highway between Fort Erie and Highway 401.
- Reintroduce rail lines (include rail lines with any highway solution).
- Suggest reducing speeds on the highways to encourage the shipment of goods by rail.
- Increase frequency of public transit.

- Consider inter-modal travel along Highway 401.
- Better traffic control required at GO Transit stations.
- A bridge should be built between Niagara and the Hamilton / Halton area.
- Pleased with the HOV plan presented.
- Opposition to a highway solution.

Growth Concerns & Suggestions

- The emphasis on “growth” suggests the possibility of paving over the preliminary study area.
- Immigrant settlement should be evenly distributed outside of the GTA.
- Concern about population growth.
- Municipalities should limit their growth.
- Concern regarding the interpretation of the term “Green field” in the Growth Plan.
- Should not base growth projections on economics, but rather on environmental impacts.

Border & Trade Concerns

- Concern that goods movement from the U.S. to Canada and vice versa should not be accommodated or encouraged to grow. More reliance on domestic products.
- Provide easy flow of goods between Buffalo and the GTA and Kitchener – Waterloo area.

Consultation & Involvement In The Study

- The Federal government should be actively engaged in the process.
- Use political pressure to entice all the stakeholders to cooperate (e.g. rail, trucks, transit).
- Suggestion to hold PICs in more communities because they are very informative.
- Skepticism as to whether project staff is biased toward a highway solution since they participated in the Mid-Peninsula Corridor Study.
- Suggest that industries be consulted to identify how employment and production can be staggered to minimize the intensive use of highways.
- The consultation process should reflect the study stages.

Additional Considerations For The Study

- Emphasis should be placed on the importance of the Niagara Escarpment and other Policy Areas.
- Need to consider the entire Golden Horseshoe – combine this study with study being undertaken by the group overseen by Rob McIsaac.
- Photo radar needs to be reintroduced.
- More effort on changing a mindset dominated by the car. Use European techniques that place a high cost on driving and subsidize transit.

Documentation Request & Other Comments

- Suggestion to make the Draft Study Plan as accessible as possible.
- Make us of TVO.

Media

The Burlington Post