

Session: **Public Information Centre #1 Summary**
Location: **St. Catharines - Quality Inn
Parkway Convention Centre**

Date: **June 14, 2007**
Time: **4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Introduction

The second 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 Thursday June 14, 2007 at the Quality Inn (Parkway Convention Centre) in St. Catharines. 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 (Linda McAusland, John Slobodzian, Darlene Proudfoot, Robin Ashdown, Sam Di Felice, Frank Williams, Frank Pravitz and Will Mackenzie), URS Canada Inc. (Paul Hudspith, Steve Jacobs, Tyler Drygas, Margie Gonzalez, and Holy Wright), TSH (Paul Bumstead), 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 46 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. Seven 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

Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities

- General agreement with the content/nature of the study and the intent to consider a multi-modal Transportation Development Strategy.
- Need to focus on marine and rail solutions.
- Consider a cross-lake bridge (Lake Ontario).

Consultation & Involvement

- Inquiries as to why Halton is involved in this study.
- Inquiries whether Haldimand is involved in this study.
- Consider additional notification approaches for study (consultation) events.
- Suggest presentations to high schools to get them engaged.
- Suggest that other initiatives (i.e. NAFTA) be considered in the study process.

Concerns & Suggestions

- Misunderstanding that the ToR approval was for a specific solution rather than the study process.
- Concerns regarding the accuracy of population projections presented in the Growth Plan (given that recent population projections in the area have not been met).
- Concern regarding potential impacts to agriculture.
- Concern that this project is moving forward.
- The waste and contamination maps presented are not complete.

Requested Documentation

- Several requests for hard copies of the overview reports.

Timeframes

- Frustration regarding the length of time required to complete the EA.

Written Comments***Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities***

- The key issue is moving goods across the international border to the growth areas.
- There are already enough existing roads for intra-provincial traffic.
- An inter-modal shipping industry across Lake Ontario would be cost effective and minimize impacts to the Niagara Escarpment and not adversely contribute to Air Quality.
- Various suggestions for locations of a new highway in the Preliminary Study Area.
- Consider Ferry Service from Niagara to Toronto.
- Rail should be a key area for expansion.
- Expand inter-urban transit (travel between Hamilton and St. Catharines can not be accommodated by transit).

Consultation & Involvement

- Region of Niagara and Land Care Niagara should be consulted.

Concerns & Suggestions

- There was no mapping of significant groundwater recharge area presented.
- Land not included in the Green Belt shows great potential.
- The Study Team needs to consider NAFTA, NAFTA Plus, Tilma Agreements, Global Warming, Harmonizing policies, destruction of the Niagara Escarpment and fossil fuel use.
- Need to consider the health of citizens.
- Disappointed that more concrete plans were not presented.

- Concern regarding safety on the QEW.

Requested Documentation

- There should be hard copies of the reports available at the PICs.

Media

No members of the media attended this event.