

Session: **Public Information Centre #2 Summary**Date: **March 3rd, 2009**Location: **Burlington Convention Centre**Time: **4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Introduction

The last of three events for the second round of Public Information Centres (PICs) for the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study was held on Tuesday March 3rd, 2009 at the Burlington Convention 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, George Ivanoff, Terry Hilditch, Robin Ashdown, Frank Williams, Frank Pravitz, Sam DeFelice, Liza Tharatt, and Will Mackenzie), URS Canada Inc. (Paul Hudspith, Patrick Puccini, Tyler Drygas, and Margie Gonzalez), AECOM (Mike Delsey, Paula Neto), MRC (Jack Thompson), Ecoplans (Sandy Nairn) and Lura (Liz Nield) staffed the PIC.

Purpose of the PIC

The purpose of the PIC was to present: the process for predicting and forecasting future transportation conditions; the transportation problems identified through the forecasting exercise and opportunities identified through the Goals and Objectives Discussion Paper; and to obtain feedback on information relating to the problems and opportunities within the NGTA corridor. The PIC also included an opportunity for youth to apply for membership on the project Community Advisory Group (CAG).

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

1. Welcome and Overview
2. Background and Study Process
3. How are future transportation problems predicted
4. What are future transportation problems
5. What are transportation opportunities
6. What's Next
7. First Nations

Attendance and Comments

A total of 76 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. Eight 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 the Burlington PIC:

Verbal Comments

Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities

- General agreement and understanding with the content/nature of the study and the intent to recommend a multi-modal Transportation Development Strategy
- There is no simple solution - a multi-modal solution is necessary

- Skeptical that solution will be multi-modal but positive results are more likely with this study
- Need to focus on rail solutions
- Need to consider multi-modal opportunities for expanding tourism (e.g. ferries across lake)
- Consider GO Transit expansion into Niagara
- Optimize the existing transportation system should be first priority
- Each mode should provide service to both commuters and freight at different times

Stakeholder Consultation & Participation

- Displays are clear, informative and understandable
- Appreciation for the amount of consideration being taken with the study
- Frustration regarding the length of time required to complete the study
- Community Advisory Group (CAG) needs more time to discuss study topics

General Comments, Concerns & Suggestions

- Various individuals were expecting to see solutions and a proposed route
- Aggregate industry is pleased with focus on goods movement
- Concern regarding impacts to natural resources
- A sustainability assessment should be included in the work for this study
- Inquiry as to how heritage farms will be addressed in the assessment of alternatives
- Need to update environmental inventory to include recent Halton Natural Heritage Study
- Picture of Milton Quarry is inaccurate (Existing Conditions boards)
- Inquiries regarding details on growth projections, and modeling and forecasting
- This study needs to consider issues and effects related to peak oil
- Inquiries regarding the alternatives that will be developed
- Inquiries regarding how the Project Team will document assumptions (e.g. gas prices, currency rates) in developing alternatives?
- Make allowances for less growth than the Growth Plan specifies

Written Comments

Multi-Modal Approach / Opportunities

- Agree with multi-modal approach
- There are opportunities to remove commuters from roads
- Since goods movement and tourism are not as flexible as commuters, focus on discouraging commuting via automobile
- Suggestion to make transit free for commuters and tourists
- Make transit accessible within certain proximity of every resident or improve frequency
- Consider carbon tax model or personal travel rationing (imposed by government) to discourage commuting
- Use taxation system to discourage automobile and truck traffic – use that revenue to make transit free
- More emphasis needed on reducing emissions and increasing transit
- Need to consider fuel costs
- Restore and revitalize rail transport systems

- Increase rail transit to Niagara Region for commuters and tourists
- Incorporate active transportation (e.g. cycling/walking) for commuters and tourism and provide appropriate infrastructure
- Suggestion to incorporate bike lanes and sidewalks on bridges and on/off ramps
- Consider a high-speed rail corridor from Windsor to Quebec that is integrated with the overall GTA transportation system
- Better integration from a “big picture” perspective between NGTA and GTA West
- Support for a Mid-Peninsula highway that mitigates impacts to agricultural and natural lands to the greatest extent
- Consider several demographic/economic scenarios on a provincial, regional, and local scale

General Comments, Concerns & Suggestions

- Concern regarding conflicting tourism projections and the likelihood of these projections
- Inquiry as to whether the current economic downturn was accounted for in the forecasting
- Suggestion to delay this study until the current economic downturn subsides
- Skepticism regarding specific modeling assumptions given the current economic situation
- A review of projections may be needed
- Modelling is inaccurate regarding: air travel, economic shift
- Concern regarding lack of information on environmental impacts
- Opportunities should be expanded to include more specific environmental factors (e.g. air emissions, pollution, greenhouse gases, wildlife crossings, fragmentation, etc.) and social factors (e.g. asthma, auto-related fatalities)
- Concern that there is little discussion on agriculture
- Challenge to constrain sprawl in Niagara
- Concern that municipalities are not adhering to the Greenbelt Plan Act and Places to Grow
- Consider greater transit subsidies (in recognition of climate change concerns)
- Do not build a superhighway
- The language used in the displays was not public-friendly
- Disappointment that active transportation has not been incorporated
- Stop highway widening, this only increases congestion
- Maintain agricultural land to the greatest extent to improve self-sufficiency

Media

Burlington Post
Bay Observer
Oakville Today