

Stakeholder Consultation in the Identification of Transportation Problems and Opportunities

The study team is fully committed to exploring all modes of transportation in the Niagara to GTA corridor and to developing a multi-modal “Transportation Development Strategy”. Integral to this exercise is the identification of transportation problems and opportunities. To accomplish this, both technical work (i.e., modelling and forecasting) and stakeholder consultation are key components. This paper focuses on the consultation program. Information regarding the complementary technical work is provided in a companion document.

General

Over the winter and early spring, the study team has had numerous meetings with stakeholders and advisory groups regarding what the current transportation problems in the corridor are, and how they would like to see the transportation system work, both today and in the future.

Specific

A summary of information provided by each group is included in the following sections.

1. PROJECT ADVISORY GROUPS

a) COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

The purpose of the CAG meeting held on November 29th was threefold, to:

- Introduce the process of identifying problems and opportunities;
- Brainstorm a vision for the transportation system in the Niagara to GTA (NGTA) Corridor, and
- Identify current transportation problems - from a community perspective.

The vision and problem statements agreed to by CAG are listed below:

- **Vision:** The creation of an environmentally sustainable, multi-modal transportation system that is safe, accessible, and improves on existing infrastructure.
- **Problem Statements:**
 - Lack of coordination between land use and transportation planning
 - Capacity/congestion on existing transportation network
 - Lack of modal options
 - Lack of flexibility
 - Safety concerns on existing network (i.e., mix of truck and car traffic)
 - Inefficient / unreliable alternatives
 - Car culture
 - Promotion of sprawl

b) MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (MTAG) / REGULATORY AGENCY ADVISORY GROUP (RAAG)

A joint MTAG / RAAG meeting was held on December 13th, 2007 to discuss:

- The process for identifying transportation problems and opportunities;
- Views and perspectives on transportation problems; and
- Views and perspectives on transportation problems; and
- A transportation vision for the corridor that links the GTA to the Niagara Frontier.

The key comments gathered during this consultation included:

- Support for bi-national consultation;
- Concern that the NGTA study is premature; it is proceeding before the municipal land use conformity exercise is completed
 - Specifically, land use assumptions to be used in the NGTA demand forecasting and transportation modelling exercise will not be consistent with the final land use allocations established by the municipalities;
- Suggestion that transportation modelling should account for future planned infrastructure and aggressive model shift scenarios; and
- General agreement with the CAG's transportation vision and their perspectives on transportation problems and opportunities.

c) MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE ADVISORY GROUP (MEAG)

The purpose of the MEAG meeting held on April 10th, 2008 was to present and discuss transportation problems and opportunities, and consultation work undertaken to date. At that meeting, the project team learned the following:

- Niagara is commencing with a port study related to existing airports and are considering expanding this to include marine ports as well.
- The Hamilton Port Authority has undertaken an economic study that considered ties between economic development and environmental issues; an approach that may be useful to the NGTA study.

2. STAKEHOLDERS**TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS (TSP) AND BUSINESS & COMMERCIAL STAKEHOLDERS (BCS)**

TSPs that own and operate transportation services in the preliminary study area were consulted as they are in the best position to provide insights with respect to existing and future transportation problems, opportunities, trends, and limitations/barriers to expanding or enhancing the transportation system. The goal of consultation with TSPs was to:

- Develop a better understanding of people and goods movements within the Preliminary Study Area by mode; and
- Obtain input on the following to facilitate the development of a freight/passenger movement profile for each TSP and the identification of transportation system problems and opportunities within the preliminary study area:
 - Information on existing infrastructure and services;
 - Problems with the existing transportation network;

- Opportunities (transportation, economic, etc.)
- Future trends in transportation services;
- Limitations to transportation services (legal/policy/economic/operational etc.); and
- Future plans for improving transportation operations and/or infrastructure.

Similarly, consultation with the **BCS** was undertaken to identify:

- Rationale for modal choice;
- Elements of the existing transportation system that adversely affect operations;
- Opportunities for network improvements; and
- Future transportation challenges.

The consultation approach was the same for these two groups and involved a two-tiered approach. Each Tier 1 participant was questioned either over the phone or in a face-to-face meeting; Tier 2 participants filled out questionnaires. This exercise resulted in 27 interviews and 26 completed questionnaires. For more details regarding the TSP and BCS consultation framework, and the Tier 1 and 2 break-downs, refer to the “Stakeholder Groups” page of the project website (www.niagara-gta.com).

Tables 1 and 2 (attached) summarize the key problems and opportunities identified during consultation with the TSP and BCS, respectively.

Table 1: Transportation Service Providers

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES: SUMMARIZED

Problems:

Accessibility & Connectivity

- ❑ Poor access / connections between major transportation hubs (e.g. regional airports), inter-modal facilities, and modes.
- ❑ Location of Niagara Transit inter-municipal terminal is a disincentive.
- ❑ Concept of several short haul inter-modal terminals is not viable.
- ❑ Insufficient inter-city highway infrastructure has negative impact on freight movement to / from local / regional airports.

Effectiveness & Efficiency

- ❑ Congestion.
- ❑ Lack of available infrastructure.
- ❑ Need to improve existing transit service issues before providing new services.
- ❑ Relief in nodes is needed for bottleneck hotspots.
- ❑ Train stations and rail yards established several years ago were not constructed to accommodate the longer trains of today.
- ❑ Trucks use secondary roads to avoid congestion.
- ❑ Understanding of freight movement on roads other than 400 series highways is limited.

Modal Choice

- ❑ Modal choice and access is limited.
- ❑ Non-roadway modes of transportation are not as reliable.
- ❑ Lack of coordination between various modes of transportation.
- ❑ Increased passenger rail train service will impact freight operations.

Safety

- ❑ Lower speed commercial vehicles pose safety concern on highways.

Environmental & Social Sensitivity

- ❑ Impacts on agricultural lands
- ❑ Impacts associated with increased automobile usage (e.g. air quality)

International Trade & Economics

- ❑ Lack of available infrastructure limits growth potential
- ❑ Freight movements through border crossings are not fast enough.

Tourism

- ❑ External forces (e.g. higher gas prices, decline in U.S. dollar)
- ❑ Limited transit, rail, and marine services for tourists
- ❑ Border delays and congestion
- ❑ Border security, jurisdictional issues, and border requirements.

Policy

- ❑ Provincial legislation or agreement from host municipality is required to change imposed service limits.
- ❑ No public funds for rail infrastructure.
- ❑ Zoning and lack of capital restrain expansion of services.
- ❑ Provincial policies for protecting transportation assets are not strong.
- ❑ EA process and provincial planning initiatives such as the Greenbelt Plan delay / restrict growth and development

Opportunities:

Accessibility & Connectivity

- ❑ Interregional connections between transit services.
- ❑ Introduce a secondary “transit hub” in Hamilton.
- ❑ Improved freight and passenger linkages to GTA / Toronto / Niagara Falls.

Effectiveness & Efficiency

- ❑ Improvements / widening of existing highways and transit/rail service expansion may provide relief to congestion.
- ❑ Increased service and flexibility for shipping are provided at Hamilton International Airport (i.e. operates 24 hours a day / 7 days a week).
- ❑ Integration of transportation services needed.
- ❑ Inter-modal terminals can be expanded to accommodate future container demand

Modal Choice

- ❑ Use of secondary airports.
- ❑ Share parallel facilities.
- ❑ Other modes have potential for greater use (marine is underutilized, rail is consistently utilized).
- ❑ Planned GO Transit and other transit service providers expansions.
- ❑ Increased incentives to encourage both expanded service and ridership.
- ❑ Some rail corridors can accommodate additional lines within existing R.O.W.s

Tourism

- ❑ Reliance on tourism and tourist traffic.

Policy

- ❑ Coordinate various modal interests.
- ❑ NGTA can learn from other more specific studies (e.g. Peace Bridge Expansion project, Niagara Frontier Urban Area Freight Transportation Study, etc.).
- ❑ Integrate major transportation projects.
- ❑ Consider funding programs to assist with infrastructure improvements.
- ❑ Provincial commitment to improve transit services.
- ❑ Service standards that maintain and control transit operations.

General Comments:

- ❑ A distribution-based economy requires a multimodal transportation network to function effectively.
- ❑ Shippers' number one concern is reliability, not cost or time.
- ❑ An increase in tourism generally results in increased air travel.
- ❑ Secondary airports are growing in significance.

Table 2: Business and Commercial Stakeholders

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES: SUMMARIZED

Problems:

Accessibility & Connectivity

- ❑ Hamilton International Airport requires improved roadway / highway connections.
- ❑ Problems with Burlington Skyway Bridge closures.

Effectiveness & Efficiency

- ❑ Road infrastructure needs maintenance / repair and improvement.
- ❑ Congestion impedes productivity, reliability (i.e. on-time delivery) and increases costs.
- ❑ Difficult to “switch” to rail due to tight timelines and reliability – rail is not made for quick delivery.
- ❑ Gridlock, poor condition of some roads, and border crossing issues cause problems for on-time delivery.
- ❑ Major routes are heavily congested during much of the business day.

Modal Choice

- ❑ Lack of alternate routing options.
- ❑ Communities have been built around the car.
- ❑ Freight movement by air and marine are not viable alternatives for goods movement.

Environmental & Social Sensitivity

- ❑ Insufficient agricultural lands for growing population.

International Trade & Economics

- ❑ Less congested areas are appealing from an economic perspective.
- ❑ Premiums are being paid to ship freight within the GTA.
- ❑ Introduction of fees, tolls, restrictions, etc. would create problems for the auto industry in terms of maintaining a competitive advantage.
- ❑ Labour shortage of qualified truck drivers.
- ❑ Businesses are hesitant to advocate any transportation mode (i.e. fear of alienating potential customers).
- ❑ Vehicular congestion on the QEW can limit the vitality of certain industries in Downtown Burlington.

Tourism

- ❑ Delays at international bridge crossings.
- ❑ Decline in U.S. visitors who travel by car.

Policy

- ❑ Greenbelt restrictions – need to be able to grow south of the Greenbelt.
- ❑ Lack of urgency to put infrastructure in place.
- ❑ Concern with the Growth Plan allocations (e.g. smaller communities have more room to grow yet are not allocated growth).

- ❑ Self-sustained communities are not being promoted enough.
- ❑ New development is directed to build where there are no primary transportation corridors.
- ❑ Industrial land shortage.

Opportunities:

Accessibility & Connectivity

- ❑ Improved use of and access to regional airports.
- ❑ Increased connectivity and development.
- ❑ Red Hill Valley Parkway has improved access to the Hamilton International Airport.
- ❑ Build new corridor(s), improve existing infrastructure.

Effectiveness & Efficiency

- ❑ Separating people and goods movement.
- ❑ More goods movement or even shifts in movements will lead to more trucks for goods distribution.

Modal Choice

- ❑ Rail / marine and efficient highways from the east coast in Canada could potentially be very important to Ontario business.
- ❑ Increased alternative mode options.
- ❑ Hamilton already has facilities in place to facilitate modal integration (e.g. Hamilton International Airport, Port of Hamilton).
- ❑ Trend of goods movement from emerging areas will continue (i.e. more marine / rail).
- ❑ Short cross-lake shipping has enormous potential.
- ❑ Implement short-term solutions (e.g. Nanticoke looking at freight carrier across Lake Erie).

International Trade & Economics

- ❑ Optimize international gateways.
- ❑ Identify important U.S. linkages.
- ❑ Compete with other bi-national trade corridors.
- ❑ Ontario-U.S. trade relationship is the third biggest in the world.
- ❑ Cross border trade is still strong.

Policy

- ❑ Reinforce "Grow South" strategy.
- ❑ Improved signage program.
- ❑ Optimize / promote toll usage.

General Comments:

- ❑ The capacity of the current transportation system has a minor impact on students.
- ❑ NGTA should be a Provincial priority.
- ❑ The capacity of the existing transportation system affects potential for economic development.
- ❑ Don't rely on shift in mindset. Look for environmentally sustainable solutions.



NIAGARA TO GTA CORRIDOR PLANNING & EA STUDY – Phase 1

- ❑ Growth and change should not be viewed negatively.
- ❑ Transportation is a key consideration for firms considering investing in Ontario.
- ❑ Receiving and unloading of commercial goods is increasingly done during off peak hours.
- ❑ Third party distributors work 24 hours.