

NIAGARA TO GTA CORRIDOR EA – Phase 1 Community Advisory Group – Minutes of Meeting

The **third Community Advisory Group (CAG)** meeting regarding the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and EA Study was held on February 27th, 2008 at the Casablanca Winery Inn from 6:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

Purpose

The meeting was held as an information seminar on Transportation Modelling and Demand Forecasting.

Attendance

A total of 27 members of the CAG attended the meeting. Regrets were received from 5 members.

Representatives from the Project Team included the Ministry of Transportation (John Slobodzian, Terry Hilditch and Frank Williams), URS, TSH, MRC and Ecoplans. Independent facilitator from Lura Consulting, Sally Leppard facilitated the meeting.

The meeting presentation is attached as **Appendix A**.

In attendance:

Project Team:

John Slobodzian, MTO	Patrick Puccini, URS
Terry Hilditch, MTO	Jack Thompson, MRC
Frank Williams, MTO	Paul Bumstead, TSH
Michael Chiu, MRC	Sally Leppard, Lura Consulting (Facilitator)
Sandy Nairn, Ecoplans	Liz Nield, Lura Consulting (Facilitator)

Community Advisory Group Members:

John Bacher	David Rokosh
John Beam	John Ruicci
Neil Bryson	Guy Sheppard
Edwin Cook	Charles P. Skelton
Ben Dikkeboom	David Suhadolc
Jack Freiburger	Henry Swierenga
Prof. Chris Fullerton	Robin van de Lande
William Griffiths	Kevin VanderMeulen
Michael Hourigan	Kumbir Vandeyar
Brenda Kingsmill	Thomas Whitelaw
Carol Jones	Edith Zimmermann
Alan Judson	Walter Zimmermann
Jay Mitchell	Pete Zuzek
Anne Redish	

1. Welcome

Ms. Leppard welcomed participants to the session, and indicated that this information session is in response to a request from the CAG at the last meeting on November 29, 2007, and is intended to provide attendees with an understanding of basic transportation modelling principles, as well as the specific transportation modelling and demand forecasting approach that is being used for this study.

2. Presentation

Mr. Patrick Puccini (URS) provided a presentation on the overall transportation problems and opportunities process, transportation modelling and demand forecasting principles, and the transportation modelling and demand forecasting approach to be used for this study. This approach utilizes the Greater Golden Horseshoe Model and a Strategic Demand Forecasting approach that has been developed by the project team.

Participants provided comments at scheduled breaks in the presentation as well as after the presentation.

Discussion

The following summarizes participant's questions (identified with 'Q') or comments (identified with 'C'), and responses from the project team in *italics* (identified with 'A') where provided.

Basic Principles

Q: Author Jane Jacobs wrote in "The Coming Dark Age" a critique of Transportation Models. She maintained that transportation models are not scientifically sound because there are too many variables and assumptions. In addition, does the model account for the effects of congestion?

A: *Computer models are an important tool, but technical experts are also needed to analyze the model results and make any necessary adjustments to account for the assumptions used by the model. In terms of congestion, this is accounted for in the modelling process.*

Q: Does the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) model use the Transportation Tomorrow Survey (TTS)? Can the model consider "what if" scenarios?

A: *The GGH Model uses data from the TTS. The strategic demand forecasting approach provides the flexibility to consider "what if" scenarios. This approach will be discussed in more detail during the presentation this evening.*

Q: Does the model take into account international traffic?

A: *The model includes 'gateways' to account for vehicles crossing the international border crossings and travelling through the Niagara Region and beyond.*

- Q: On slide 10 you indicated that population growth was part of the statistical analysis. In 1966 it was forecasted that Hamilton would have one million people – based on this analysis it was decided to build the Red Hill Valley Parkway, however the forecast was wrong. How do you test the model to make sure that the statistical analysis and assumptions are accurate?
- A: *All of the work being done for this study, including the transportation modelling and demand forecasting work is based on the future population and employment growth specified in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This future population and employment growth is also being incorporated into municipal official plans. This enables coordination between future land use planning and transportation planning.*
- C: If you go to the Niagara Region's website, there is a document that is disputing the Growth Plan, and using the Mid-Peninsula Highway as a focus.
- A: *This project is being undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Growth Plan, and is considering all modes of transportation in developing a future transportation development strategy for the Niagara to GTA corridor.*
- Q: Concern about trucks, using roads that were built 100 years ago and there are no safety features. Will this study focus on those roads?
- A: *As the scope of this meeting is to discuss the transportation modelling and demand forecasting approach being used for this study, it was suggested that this issue be discussed further at the next CAG meeting.*
- Q: In addition to using the Growth Plan as a basis, will the project team undertake any risk analysis regarding future land use assumptions?
- A: *This study is being undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Growth Plan. The project team may look at a range reasonable future land use scenarios provided they are consistent with the Growth Plan.*
- Q: How will you overcome cross-correlation of parameters?
- A: *The generation of trips in the model is based on trip purpose to avoid cross-correlation of parameters.*
- C: Concerns expressed about impact of congestion.
- A: *The model and forecasting approach addresses congestion-related impacts.*

Greater Golden Horseshoe Model Trip Generation

- Q: Is trip generation predictive? In regard to the Growth Plan, as communities grow and become self-sustaining, do the trip generation characteristics change in the model?

A: *The generation of trips is based on future population and employment growth that is consistent with the requirements of the Growth Plan. Municipalities are also basing their official plans on these requirements.*

Q: Concern about the models capability to manage/predict variables. Can the model consider “what if” scenarios and unknowns (e.g. emerging US position on NAFTA, Ontario may become a “have not” province)?

A: *The strategic demand forecasting approach will be used to test the sensitivity of the future transportation needs based on a range of future scenarios that will capture different economic conditions.*

Q: What is the role of the community advisory groups?

A: *It is envisioned that the Community Advisory Group will play a key role throughout this study. With regard to transportation modelling and demand forecasting, input provided by the CAG will be reviewed and incorporated as appropriate in the strategic demand forecasting process.*

Q: On Slide 29, there are six factors listed which affect trip production and six factors listed which affect trip attraction. Are there more factors?

A: *Yes, these are just a sample of some of the key factors that affect trip production and trip attraction.*

Q: Do demographic changes also affect the coefficients that you use in the mathematical equations described on Slide 30?

A: *The coefficients are defined on the basis of existing trip generation characteristics. However, the variables such as population, employment, etc. change based on the anticipated future growth or decline associated with each particular variable.*

Trip Distribution, Modal Split and Trip Assignment

Q: Will the model look at the possible impact of congestion pricing (costs to travel at certain times of day) of these scenarios?

A: *The GGH model does provide the ability to predict the affect of congestion pricing on the use of the transportation system. Any testing of this type of policy-based alternative would be done during the "Review/Assessment of Alternatives" stage of the study.*

Q: In the Transportation Tomorrow Survey, how are the destinations defined, i.e. by the final destination, or are interim stops accounted for?

A: *The Transportation Tomorrow Survey obtains information about the entire trip, i.e. not just the final destination.*

Q: Questioned whether expert advice on traffic forecasts could suffice without the expenditure on modelling.

A: *Technical expertise is an important element, but a transportation model provides technical experts with the ability to perform the complex computations quickly and efficiently.*

Strategic Demand Forecasting Approach

Q: The Niagara International Border Crossing Origin-Destination survey was undertaken during the summer. Should the winter period be considered as well?

A: *The survey was taken during the summer period to capture peak conditions. The border agencies can provide data for other times of the year, which can be incorporated into the modelling process.*

Q: Have any studies been done over a longer period than one weekend, what about a one week period?

A: *The Origin-Destination survey was conducted during one weekday and one weekend day and provided a significant database of information that is anticipated to be sufficient for the purposes of this study.*

Q: I have read that 80% of truck traffic crossing from US to Canada is using the QEW as the shortcut to get to Windsor. How was this accounted for in the O-D survey?

A: *The O-D survey was undertaken for passenger vehicles only. MTO's Commercial Vehicle Survey will be used to develop an understanding of existing commercial vehicle movements.*

Q: Will a comparable O-D survey for buses and trains be conducted as well?

A: *The project team is undertaking a comprehensive consultation program with Transportation Service Providers such as CN, CP, VIA, GO Transit, the Hamilton Port Authority, etc. to develop an understanding of existing transportation conditions for other modes of transportation, as well as the potential for increased utilization of other modes of transportation.*

Q: The Project Team was cautioned not to use the Wilbur Smith report, since data was generated to support a specific conclusion.

A: *Comment noted. However, the project team will review all relevant studies, such as the Wilbur Smith Report, and would use elements of these studies that would benefit our study.*

C: Concern that telephone surveys (e.g., Transportation Tomorrow survey) are not demographically representative (e.g. youth use cellular phones not land lines).

A: *It is recognized that cell phones numbers are not included in the telephone campaign. The project team will discuss this issue with the GGH Model Team and provide a response at the next CAG meeting.*

Q: On Slide 52 - demographic and economic analysis, is that the only data that you will use for freight forecasting?

A: *This is a list of key sources. Other relevant sources of information will also be investigated and used by the project team.*

Q: Will you take into account trucks vs. rail in modal split?

A: *As part of the strategic process we look at potential diversion from truck to rail. This will be based to a large extent on our consultation with Transportation Service Providers (e.g. CN, CP, OTA, etc.) as well as discussions with Business and Commercial Stakeholders that use the existing transportation to move goods.*

Q: Originally, I thought of this as a long distance problem – after seeing the zones dawned on me that the short-term travel might be an issue. Is it in your mandate to look at intra-urban transportation? How much of a focus would be placed on urban transit – walking, cycling?

A: *The project team will consider local trips in terms of how they may affect long-distance interregional trips. While this study will not specifically investigate the need for improvements to intra-regional transportation, it is recognized that the effect of local trips on provincial facilities such as the QEW needs to be considered.*

Q: In the truck surveys, do you treat all trucks as equal units? A large truck versus a small truck – are they weighted the same way?

A: *As part of MTO's Commercial Vehicle Survey, the classification and size of trucks are recorded.*

C: Concern about the impact of intra-municipal congestion on inter-regional trip forecasting. Suggest that study should fund communities to do transportation master plans if those plans are not current (e.g. last St. Catharines Master Plan from 1964).

C: Some municipalities are not implementing sustainable community plans (e.g. City of Niagara Falls Study was rejected). Municipalities need to implement the Growth Plan.

Q: The GGH Model is based on mathematical algorithms. Please describe the Strategic Demand Forecasting approach in these terms.

A: *The Strategic Demand Forecasting approach uses the same four stage process that the GGH Model uses, but relies on existing data sources as well as consultation with Transportation Service Providers, Business and Commercial Stakeholders, and municipalities to forecast future transportation conditions.*

The Strategic Demand approach is being used in parallel with the GGH Model to forecast future trips for modes of transportation that are not addressed by the GGH Model, as well as to provide a basis of comparison for modes that the GGH Model does address.

Q: Can the transportation modelling and demand forecasting approach consider political policy issues such as tolling?

A: *Yes, these types of issues can be considered.*

Q: Do you obtain data from employers regarding number of employees that they have? For example, obtaining information about where those employees live in relationship to where they work? That approach might be helpful.

A: *The Transportation Tomorrow Survey focuses on the 'home end' of work trips, but information is obtained as to how employees travel to work.*

Feedback

In addition to the various comments and concerns provided on the approach to the modelling and demand forecasting exercise, participants offered the following input on the presentation style and format of the information session:

- Participants felt that overall the presentation was excellent.
- Breaks throughout the presentation were appreciated.
- It was suggested that a 'sample' equation and/or complete list of variables also be presented (i.e., for illustrative purpose... to show the level of complexity).
- Suggested that it might be helpful to provide other project examples – where modelling and travel demand forecasting has been used.
- Provide an example of the trip patterns for a specific area (i.e., excerpt from actual trip table).

Next Meeting

The next full meeting is anticipated to be held in Spring 2008. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.



Appendix A: Presentation