

NIAGARA TO GTA CORRIDOR EA – Phase 1 Community Advisory Group Meeting #2 Summary Report

The **second Community Advisory Group (CAG)** meeting regarding the Niagara to GTA Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study was held on November 29, 2007 at the Casablanca Winery Inn from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- (a) Provide participants with an update on the Study's progress;
- (b) Introduce members to the process to identify area transportation problems and opportunities;
- (c) Brainstorm a Vision for a transportation system in the Niagara to GTA Corridor; and
- (d) Identify current problems from a community perspective.

Attendance:

A total of 31 members of the CAG attended the meeting. Regrets were received from 8 members.

Representatives from the Project Team included the Ministry of Transportation (John Slobodzian, Terry Hilditch and Pat Boeckner), URS, MRC and Ecoplans. A team of independent facilitators from Lura Consulting, Sally Leppard, Barry Randall and Liz Nield facilitated the meeting.

The meeting agenda is attached as **Appendix A** and detailed participant feedback is found in **Appendix B**.

In attendance:

Project Team:

John Slobodzian, MTO	Jack Thompson, MRC
Pat Boeckner, MTO	Sally Leppard, Lura Consulting (Facilitator)
Terry Hilditch, MTO	Liz Nield, Lura Consulting (Facilitator)
Michael Chiu, MRC	Barry Randall, Lura Consulting (Facilitator)
Sandy Nairn, Ecoplans	Marina Saldana, Lura Consulting
Tyler Drygas, URS	

Community Advisory Group Members:

Sylvia Baago	Michael Hourigan	Charles P. Skelton
John Bacher	Carol Jones	Paul Smeltzer
John Beam	Alan Judson	Henry Swierenga
John Boich	Brenda Kingsmill	Katherine Tracz
Neil Bryson	Jeff Lennard	Kevin VanderMeulen
Jeanne Bullock	Jay Mitchell	Kumbir Vandeyar
Edwin Cook	Tony Onufer	Chris Walker
Ben Dikkeboom	Grahame Richards	Thomas Whitelaw
Ethan Griesbach	David Rokosh	Edith Zimmermann
William (Bill) Griffiths	Richard ROUNG	Walter Zimmermann
	Giovanni (John) Ruicci	

1. Welcome, Agenda Review and Review of Meeting Notes

Ms. Leppard reviewed the agenda with participants and received general acceptance of the agenda. CAG members reviewed and approved the record of the first CAG meeting held on September 20th, 2007, with no changes.

CAG members offered the following comments:

- C: It is important to provide executive summaries of reports for both the CAG members and the public participating in this process.
- C: Consideration should continue to be given to engaging participants from outside the corridor (e.g., Haldimand-Norfolk).
- C: Brock University would not be the best location for a CAG meeting.
A: *CAG members had previously agreed to hold meetings at the Casablanca Inn due to its convenient location. (Note: This was re-confirmed at the Nov. 29th meeting.)*
- C: The assumptions behind the model and forecasting methodology should be discussed with interested CAG members.
A: *A special technical session could be held on this topic, and other technical topics as needed/requested. CAG members are encouraged to contact the facilitator to suggest these meetings.*

2. Presentation

Mr. John Slobodzian provided a presentation on the following topics:

- An overview of the needs assessment process;
- The work completed since the last CAG meeting; and
- The proposed approach to identifying area transportation problems and opportunities.

Throughout, and after the presentation, participants asked questions and provided comments:

- Q: Railroads have operated for many years in many cities – however trucks are now the primary freight carrier. Is there any thought of putting the railway system back?
A: *Throughout the study process (including the identification of problems/potential solutions stage) attempts will be made to engage the rail companies (e.g., CN, CP, short line rail owners, etc.).*
- Q: The line surrounding the map that includes the study area is “fuzzy”; not clear – does the study area end at a certain point?
A: *The boundary of the Preliminary Study Area is intended to be “fuzzy” at this stage of the process (i.e., Phase 1). It broadly encompasses the Region of Niagara, the City of Hamilton, and the Region of Halton.*
- *The Preliminary Study Area may be modified based on the identification of the area transportation system problems and opportunities.*

- *The study area will become more defined in Phase 2 of the study.*

Q: Given that MTO's jurisdiction does not address all transportation modes there is a need to engage/obtain commitments from other modes (e.g., rail - CP, CN) to ensure that a multi-modal plan can be implemented. Can the province expand MTO's jurisdiction?

A: *The Project Team is currently working with transportation service providers to identify problems and potential solutions. The Project Team is not aware of any proposed changes to MTO's mandate.*

C: Suggest that we need a plan for moving freight across the Welland canal -- concern that the QEW is already at full capacity. A suggestion was provided for a new highway route.

C: The new system should support industry in areas like Hamilton, Guelph and Brantford.

Q: How will growth and economic forecasts be addressed in the identification of transportation problems? The new Growth Plan is unproven in terms of its impact.

A: *Growth outlined in the Growth Plan (in conjunction with the municipal/Official Plan conformity exercise) along with projected economic conditions will be built into the forecasting exercise.*

Q: Need to be aware of the potential problems that a "solution" may create.

A: *These impacts will be examined in the process.*

Q: How does the newly announced Detroit to Windsor Gateway study affect this study?

A: *Information can be provided to the CAG about this study. The NGTA Project Team will attempt to keep abreast of the Gateway Project progress and utilize any recommendations and conclusions as appropriate.*

Q: It is important that other advisory groups to this process have the same opportunities as CAG. As well, CAG needs to hear from other transportation providers, such as rail. The question was raised whether some groups will have more influence than others.

A: *The only priorities are legal and policy. Everything else will be considered equally (e.g., the study will weight the options, and CAG can participate in this process).*

3. Facilitated Round Tables

CAG members formed three groups. Each group discussed their vision for the transportation system in the Niagara to GTA Corridor and identified current problems in the area. Highlights from the round table discussions are summarized below.

Vision 2031

What are some Vision elements for the transportation system in the Niagara to GTA Corridor in 2031?

- Environmentally sustainable/beneficial
- Financially efficient and viable
- Recognize social equity
- Multimodal system
- Safe system

- Accessible
- Public transit
- Efficiency (i.e., live/work relationship)
- Better use of current corridor
- Accessible systems
- Environmentally sustainable – less impact than today
- World class model and brand for environmental and tourism sustainability
- Financially efficient and viable
- An efficient, seamless, environmentally friendly system
- High occupancy and mass transit system
- Include environmental full cost accounting in decision making process
- A multi modal system with accessible, socially equitable choices
- Include land use planning to encourage strong live/ work relationship
- Sustainable with new and present configuration of roads/rails/ waterways
- Easy to use; safe and utilized by many

Current Conditions

What problems do you feel are facing the current Transportation System in the Niagara to GTA Corridor today?

What problems currently affect people movement?

- Lack of environmentally friendly, attractive, socially equitable transportation choices
- Our lifestyle choices include preferences for automobiles (including single occupant cars)
- Congestion (at peak periods), bottlenecks and mixed use of roads (trucks and cars), lack of capacity on roads
- Lack of alternative options, routes and methods for transit
- Lack of flexible hours for companies
- Lack of variety in transportation
- Urban sprawl
- Physical features of the land
- Planning and transportation not coordinated between/among municipalities
- Pollution e.g., smog

What problems currently affect freight and goods movement?

- Over reliance on trucks for the movement of freight and goods
- The mixed use of car and truck traffic on same highway
- Absence of mass transit options for goods
- Inequity in government support for alternatives to road transport
- Trucks using roads not built for them, lack of capacity for trucks
- Lack of investment in modernization of facilities, and investments/financing in transit and roadways
- Lack of options (truck focused)

- Just in time delivery (is a system promoting trucks and is an enemy of the environment)
- Pollution e.g., smog

Following the discussion about each group's Vision elements and identified problems, Ms. Leppard indicated that the team would draft a Vision based on the identified elements and would distribute it to CAG for their review.

4. Other Business, Next Meeting and Adjourn

- **Media Relations:**

CAG members discussed how to deal with media inquiries regarding CAG's work. A number of options were discussed, including:

- Individual members of CAG should not attempt to represent CAG's opinions.
- Individual members of CAG could speak to the media from an individual perspective (i.e., not as a CAG representative).
- There could be one spokesperson designated (such as the Facilitator).

The results of this discussion will be forwarded to MTO's media representative who will assist the CAG to develop a protocol at the next CAG meeting.

Note: The Burlington contingent may approach the media prior to the development of a protocol.

- CAG members requested that the Project Team consider establishing an on-line forum for members (so that they can keep in contact and download material). *The study team indicated that they would consider an on-line option for the CAG.*

- **Next Meeting:**

The next full meeting is expected to be held in Spring 2008. A workshop on Travel Demand Forecasting and Modelling will be scheduled sooner; sometime over the next few months. This workshop will include a presentation on the approach that will be used to forecast the future travel demand within the Niagara to GTA Corridor. All members of the CAG will be invited to participate.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Appendix A: Agenda

AGENDA

November 29th, 2007
6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Casablanca Winery Inn

Purpose:

- a) Information briefing: Study Needs Assessment Process; Update on Study Progress (including changes to the Study Plan, and progress report); technical approach to identifying problems and opportunities.
- b) Review of CAG work plan and integration with Study process
- c) CAG working session on Vision for the Future Transportation System for the Niagara to GTA Corridor
- d) CAG working session – scoping the problems and opportunities paper

Desired outcomes:

- *Collective Vision for the Future Transportation System for the Niagara to GTA Corridor*
- *CAG perspective on current constraints and issues*

6:30 Networking

6:45 Welcome, Agenda Review and Review of Meeting Notes

7:00 Powerpoint presentation – John Slobodzian, MTO

- Update on Study Progress
- Technical Approach to Identifying “Problems and Opportunities”
- Discussion

7:15 Facilitated Round Tables:

- Creating a Vision for the Niagara to GTA Transportation Corridor Planning and EA.
- Current Constraints and Issues – Community Perspective

8:00 Ideas Round Up – Reports from round tables, common elements

8:45 Other Business, next meeting and adjourn

- CAG approach to Media Relations
- Other business – CAG members
- Next Meeting - Topics

9:00 Adjourn

Appendix B: Detailed Feedback

VISION 2031

Each breakout group was asked to focus on envisioning a desired future state and identifying problems for the transportation system within the area.

Vision for the transportation system in the Niagara to GTA Corridor in 2031?

Table 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High efficiency • Rail service, go train • Low emissions • Use container systems • Mass transit • Better land use planning (live – work) • Limit demand • Growth in non-traditional areas • Eliminate bottleneck • Multi modal (methods) • Environmentally friendly • Efficient use of corridor • Mass transit • High speed rail • Improve linkages • Air transport under used • Less congestion • Emission reduction, no oil • GO Transit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use full cost accounting (include environment) • Efficiency seamless • Address local economic development • Road networks key • Multi nodal but seamless • Mass transit • Compensate for lifestyle choices i.e. conservation • High occupancy • Continually refine the system • Demand management • User pay, full cost accounting • Reduce commute time • Socially equitable, affordable choices • Easier for tourists – more opportunities • Multi modal accessible system • Separate goods from people |
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Table 2

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy movement of people to wherever they want to go; • Less environmental impact than the current system; • Most fuel efficient mode of transport will prevail, since the future of oil is uncertain/oil may be rare • Variety of modes • Greater use of public transportation (rail, buses, car pooling) will result in pollution reduction; • All trucks more than 5 tonnes in capacity will be converted to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> train haulage at or near the border; • The system will promote economic growth and prosperity • Modelled on European examples – cherish what they have done/expertise, e.g. tunnel, rail, feeder lines; efficiency ensures throughput • Sustainable route that is least disruptive to the environment • Financially effective • Part of an integrated strategy to brand areas as green tourism destinations |
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- System seen as a world class model for environmental sustainability
- World class model, incorporates many different elements to address deficiencies
- More use of the seaway; e.g. hovercraft
- Build a bridge to St. Catharines to Mississauga
- Recognizes environmental and geographic constraints

Table 3

- Safe
- Better use of present corridor
- Communities working together to becoming self-sufficient
- Corporate industry costs
- Penalties for use of roads
- Reduced green house gases
- Reduced traffic on QEW and permit bypass to local residents
- Increased truck traffic on 407
- Effectively addresses the problem of traffic congestion – efficient movement of goods and people
- Options for travel and movement of goods (e.g. HOV lanes, bike system, use lake for commuting, mass transit)
- Readily accessible mass transit throughout area linked to Hamilton and Toronto (GO Train linking Niagara to GTA with node in Hamilton)
- Commuter train linking Niagara to GTA with node in Hamilton
- Expanded use of St. Lawrence Seaway and contain in rail system in the transport of goods
- Integrated transit system, environmentally friendly utilized by numerous passengers and utilities – capacity to move goods and people from point A to B
- Frequent usage of the transportation system through linkages other modes across municipalities
- Live/work atmosphere through a decentralization process that results in frequent usage of managed and much improved transit system

CURRENT CONDITIONS

What problems do you feel are facing the current Transportation System in the Niagara to GTA Corridor today?

A) That affect people movement?

Table 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of choices • Individualism/consumerism • Lifestyle choices • Public transit not competitive and attractive • Bigger bathrooms • 20 years behind • Bad policy i.e., 407 • Single use cars • No HOV lanes • Lack of mass transit • People need cars • Mass transit is too expensive • It is cheaper to drive • Aging population • Absence of social equity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of easy to use mass transit • No separation of vehicles i.e., trucks / cars • No choice but to use road networks • Congestion on roads and highways, especially during peak periods • Border security, and slow traffic flow at the border • Single occupancy vehicles • Land use development encourages car use • No seamless options • Model is outdated • Bottlenecks/congestion/gridlock |
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Table 2

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity problems on QEW • Congestion on QEW at certain locations and times (e.g. St. Catharines) • Current system lacks vision • Current routes indirect and inefficient • No GO train from Toronto to Fort Erie • Lack of flex hours in companies • Lack of variety/modes • Urban sprawl means people use roads more, low density • Neglected opportunities to encourage cycling, pedestrian modes • Lack of alternate routes during accidents; accident investigations too slow • Lack of planning by certain municipalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical constraints • Mass transit not cost effective or efficient the way it is currently implemented • Don't know how effective the new planning process will be – not proven • Lack of education in individuals; people don't understand the concept of effective transportation • Lack of transit continuity – different jurisdictions manage transit – lack of linkages and continuity between Cities • Growth is happening without infrastructure in place • Need more services on transit system – e.g. single tier in Niagara; amend policy and give it to the Region |
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Table 3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of efficient and user friendly public transit system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No GO Transit link from Hamilton to Niagara |
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- 401 influences on the Niagara to GTA Corridor system is not fully recognized
- Limited alternative routes other than roads
- Creating smog in fruit belt
- Toll road versus no toll road
- Environmentally unsustainable
- Border/Welland Canal is a "squeeze point"
- Lack of alternative modes of transportation
- Existing urban sprawl – lack of centralized communities
- Congestion
- Car mentality
- Lack of linkages with Municipalities
- Safety (cars using community roads rather than highways)

B.) That affect freight and goods movement?

Table 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of options • Truck/car interaction is not efficient • Seaway levels push more traffic on to roads • Inequity in support of alternative, mass container use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border crossing issues • Mixing of uses on same roads • Lack of rail options • No piggy back options on rail |
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Table 2

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just in time is an enemy of the environment • Lack of variety of freight handlers • Trillium rail – not replaced. This local issue is one example there are many others; • Large number of trucks using roads that aren't built for them • Lack of options (truck focused) • Current routs at capacity or can't be expanded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single track train routes • Lack of investment in modern facilities • Expensive tie ups, road closures, accidents results in spoiled goods • Trucks have to compete with cars • Too much focus on profit vs. environment |
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Table 3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolls or no tolls • Transports • Limited alternatives to trucks • Gridlock • Just in time delivery – system promotes truck only system • Pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion – conflicts between commuters and truck volumes • Lack of Linkages between US and Canada • No way of short circuit movement across Lake Ontario • Not spending enough on transportation including transit |
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