

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION

The purpose of consultation is to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to offer input, which assists the Project Team and the Government of Ontario with making decisions and recommendations throughout the study process.

It is important for anyone who is interested in or may be affected by an environmental assessment (EA) to have the opportunity to participate in and provide input early on and throughout the study process. With timely and meaningful input, concerns can be identified, considered and appropriately addressed; before final decisions are made.

Typically in an EA, parties that are consulted include: the general public, affected property owners, municipal representatives, special interest groups, representatives of numerous federal and provincial government agencies, and affected First Nations. These individuals and groups are sometimes collectively referred to as "stakeholders".

The Niagara to GTA (NGTA) Corridor Planning and EA Study is a large, complex transportation planning study that is being completed within the context of an individual EA. One of the key (legislated) requirements of an individual EA is meaningful consultation with all affected stakeholders.

WHO ARE THE NGTA STAKEHOLDERS & HOW ARE THEY CONSULTED?

The NGTA project has a wide range of stakeholders representing various and frequently differing views on the relationship between transportation planning and land use, economic development and environmental protection. Each stakeholder group is briefly described:

GENERAL PUBLIC

Any individual who is interested in the NGTA planning and EA study, or may be affected by the outcome of the study is encouraged to be involved in the process by providing comments related to their area of interest.

- Members of the public from Niagara, Hamilton and Halton were recruited to form the Community Advisory Group (CAG); as of May 2008 there are 48 participants. The role of the CAG, as outlined in their Charter, is to assist the Project Team by providing information and input relative to community interests and study issues.

Why is this important to the study?

Consultation with interested and potentially affected parties is an essential part of the NGTA study process. By engaging stakeholders in a transparent and open process, the Study Team can better understand what is valued within communities, and better inform decision makers.

MUNICIPALITIES

Local municipalities are consulted at both the technical and executive staff levels. The following is a brief description of both advisory groups.

- The **Municipal Technical Advisory Group (MTAG)** consists of planning and/or public works staff from the upper, single and lower tier municipalities in Niagara, Halton and Hamilton and provides technical and process related input to the Project Team.
- The **Municipal Executive Advisory Group (MEAG)** represented by two senior staff from each of the Regional Municipalities of Niagara and Halton, and the City of Hamilton; as well as a Metrolinx (formerly known as the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority – GTTA) is instrumental in ensuring that strategic interregional issues are understood and addressed throughout the project decision-making process.

BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL STAKEHOLDERS (BCS)

This group, comprised of representatives of Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas, economic and development, and tourism corporations, local real estate boards, agricultural producers and marketing boards, community development corporations, local homebuilder associations, and individual manufacturing, retail and distribution companies, provides input on current and future economic conditions and options to increase the capacity of the area transportation system.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS (TSP)

The TSP group includes representatives of inter-regional, local and private transit; rail; airports; municipal ports; the St. Lawrence Seaway, and other transportation organizations. The TSP group is actively providing transportation services within the NGTA corridor. Consultation with these agencies is critical to both the identification of problems and opportunities, and the evaluation of options to increase capacity of the area transportation system.

FIRST NATIONS

To ensure that First Nation attributes in the NGTA study, including Indian reserves, land claims, treaty areas, sacred grounds, traditional land and resource locations, etc., are known and considered; the Project Team looks to the affected First Nations for leadership, guidance and assistance. First Nations potentially affected by the NGTA corridor currently include Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

REGULATORY AGENCIES

The Regulatory Agency Advisory Group (RAAG), consisting of representatives from federal departments and agencies (e.g., Environment Canada, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency); provincial ministries (e.g., Ministries of Environment, Natural Resources, Public Infrastructure and Renewal); and provincial and local agencies (e.g., Niagara Escarpment Commission, conservation authorities), provide the Project Team with input and advice regarding laws, regulations, policies, programs and other areas of concern within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

THE PRINCIPLES OF NGTA CONSULTATION & THE SPECIFIC CONSULTATION APPROACH

In an effort to inform and engage stakeholders and obtain constructive feedback, the NGTA project team is using a multi-media approach to consultation. This approach is designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- provide numerous and varied opportunities for stakeholders to participate in and provide input to the project;
- ensure that key messages and concepts are conveyed in a clear, concise and understandable manner;
- educate stakeholders about the process and outcomes;
- explain complex project details; and
- demonstrate a transparent decision-making process.

The following multi-media techniques to engage with stakeholders are currently being used:

- Public Information Centres (PICs) including display materials;
- Interactive project website;
- Project office (in St. Catharines);
- Television style videos;
- Newsletters (issued on a periodic basis - electronically and hard copy);
- Fact sheets;
- "Frequently Asked Questions" document;
- Interim project reports (issued in draft - electronically and hard copy);
- Advisory group meetings (regulatory agencies, municipalities, community);
- Project team presentations (to groups and individuals); and
- 1-800 telephone number (for providing comments and/or asking questions).

For more details regarding the NGTA consultation program, refer to chapter 8 in the Study Plan (December 2007). A copy is available on the NGTA website www.niagara-gta.com. Also available on the website are summary notes for meetings held with each of the above-noted stakeholder groups. The Study Plan or meeting minutes are also available in hard copy upon request.

Contact Information

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