

King officials concerned about GTA West route, impacts

By Mark Pavilons

Residents, councillors and Township staff are working together to mitigate the impacts of the planned GTA West Corridor. Routes for the multi-lane toll road planned by the province are currently being reviewed. And one comes a little too close for comfort as far as King residents are concerned.

Councillors approved a staff report, outlining King's position on the corridor, but not before making some points very clear. Mayor Steve Pellegrini stressed that King strongly opposes proposed route 7F, which runs just south of Nobleton. Further, councillor David Boyd wanted it noted that methods to mitigate any increased traffic through Nobleton because of the corridor be examined and discussed. Councillors also made it clear they will not support extending the 7th Concession to Pine Valley Drive. Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the whole issue is giving her "a lot of heartburn."

It was first identified in 2002 to address long-term inter-regional transportation problems in the GTA.

She recalls speaking to officials at York Region a couple of years ago noting the corridor is not a solution and she still doesn't believe it's the right solution today.

"I'm very skeptical," she said, adding there are a lot of issues surrounding the corridor, not the least of which are environmental. While nothing is firm, the province is at the point of identifying a preferred route. But Schaefer said even finding the route is premature until the costs are known.

King staff, she said, has done a good job at looking out for the Township's interests.

Planning Director Stephen Kitchen said staff have been taking part in working sessions as part of the Municipal Advisory Group. The Township is active in advocating for and identifying the route map and interchanges quickly. He observed that lands in Brampton and Vaughan are getting purchased and developed quickly, so it's important that the province identifies the route as soon as possible. This will prevent the preferred route from moving northward, encroaching on King.

The route and interchange south of King on Highway 27 could relieve traffic on King Road. It would also open up more employment lands at the southern end of Nobleton.

He pointed out if options and alternatives are not looked at now, the options will be limited down the road.

So far the province has been accommodating and undertaking this process "the right way."

It's all "heading in the right direction," he said.

In a joint report prepared by Planning Director Stephen Kitchen and Public Works Director Andrew Drzewiecki, it was stressed that while King recognizes the importance of identifying and protecting the corridor, it has concerns. They're asking that the ministry consults with King on the evaluation of corridor alternatives, interchange locations and the design and selection of the preferred alignment.

Open houses and workshops were held this year to garner input.

Staff noted all of the alignments are south of the King-Vaughan border, but some of the interchanges are closer to King.

Staff said the environmental assessment began in 2014 and is slated to be wrapped up in late 2018. Following another round of consultation, preliminary design of the preferred route will begin in 2016 and end in the summer of 2017.

While the exact location of the route and interchanges raise concerns, King does admit the corridor will act as a bypass, to alleviate traffic on King Road. In order to accomplish this, however, a suitable regional road system at the end of the corridor is necessary.

"Without an interchange that connects to a suitable regional arterial road east of Highway 400 (ie. Black Creek Drive at the southern terminus of Highway 400 at Highway 401) such traffic will likely seek to use the King Road through the village core of King City to access the rest of York Region. Township staff has and continues to advocate together with York Region and the City of Vaughan that provision must be made for an interchange and arterial road connections that will allow traffic which is seeking to go east of Highway 400," the staff report states.