

## Councillors concerned about impact of Highway 400 improvements

**By Angela Gismondi**

Improvements are slated for Highway 400 in King, but councillors are concerned about construction and possible disruptions it will cause for local residents and farmers.

Roy Pritchard, consultant project manager for the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) and Heather Glass, MTO project manager, gave council an update on the Highway 400 improvements at the meeting Monday.

Pritchard focused on contract one, which includes improvements from north of King Road to north of South Canal Bank Road. The project is divided into four contracts and the first is currently being tendered, with construction expected to begin in early June.

The first phase includes the widening of Highway 400 from six to eight lanes with an overbuilt platform to accommodate the future 10-lane cross-section, including one High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. It also includes the reconstruction of the Highway 400/Highway 9 interchange, the replacement of the South Canal bridges, the expansion and illumination of the existing commuter parking lot at the Highway 400/9 interchange (with 173 additional parking stalls), the realignment of Davis Road and South Canal Bank Road in the vicinity of South Canal/Highway 400 and the installation of a retaining wall along Wist Road, on the east side of Highway 400 north of South Canal, to accommodate the widening.

In terms of the staging for contract one, the project is expected to require four construction seasons to complete, explained Pritchard. The final staging remains subject to change, he added.

Construction staging has been developed to maintain three lanes of traffic on Highway 400 in each direction and two lanes of traffic in each direction along Highway 9 during peak traffic hours. Off-peak lane reductions will be required on Highway 9 and Highway 400 to replace the existing structures and to reconfigure the interchange.

For removal of existing Highway 400/9 bridge structures, a night-time closure will be required on two occasions (one for nine hours and one for eight hours), Pritchard explained. Highway 400 traffic will be diverted through advanced signing at upstream interchanges as well as detours using the on and off-ramps. At these times Highway 9 will be closed between Jane Street and Weston Road. Temporary traffic signals will be installed at Highway 9/Jane Street to facilitate traffic diversion, he added.

South Canal Bank Road will also require a localized closure for a duration of three construction seasons and localized short duration lane reductions will be required at Davis Road and Wist Road.

Councillor Avia Eek was not pleased with the news. She said the farmers in the Holland Marsh rely heavily on South Canal Bank Road and use it to get around with their farm equipment.

"I do not envy your job of giving such bad news," said Eek. "I will need to have a crystal clear understanding of why these roads are closed because I am going to be getting a lot of phone calls from a lot of farmers. You cannot reasonably expect farm equipment to travel along Highway 9."

Pritchard explained that there is no alternative to closing South Canal Bank Road but that farmers will be able to use other roads in the area as a detour and would not have to use Highway 9.

Councillor Bill Cober asked that South Canal Bank Road be surface treated or repaved once MTO has completed that portion of the improvements.

"We would be concerned about the condition and the integrity of the road after the project," said Cober.

Glass responded the project will be going to tender next week and road resurfacing is not included in the contract. She suggested the road repaving could be tendered separately at a later date, but not at this time.

Eek pointed out that the residents had a paved road prior to the South Canal Bank Road relocation, at which time the road was torn up and had to be pulverized for safety reasons.

"We have been holding back with repaving that road because we have been waiting for the MTO project to be completed," said Eek, adding when there is an accident on Highway 400, drivers use South Canal Bank Road as a detour and because the road is pulverized, it causes a lot of dust and residents are unable to keep their windows open.

"My residents have been waiting since 2012 to have this done. They have been more than patient having lost this service."

She asked if there are any interim measures that could be taken to help the property owners.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti is concerned about the potential noise caused by the construction and how that will impact landowners who live near the 400. Pritchard ensured all the noise impact studies have been completed and noise attenuation measures are not warranted.

"It strikes me as odd that a major highway wouldn't require noise attenuation," noted Mortelliti. "Four-lane roads require noise attenuation? I would be very interested to see the noise report."

Mortelliti asked if funding were available, would be possible to put up noise attenuation walls in the areas where residents are adjacent to the highway to mitigate the noise impact.

Cober added that in the second contract, a development in his ward that backs onto the Highway may be affected by the construction noise.

?I have recently been out to listen to the Highway on a Sunday ? not on a weekday,? said Cober. ?Certainly I would say that this contract would fit the criteria for noise abatement.?

Mayor Steve Pellegrini asked to see the detailed design for the project.

?We not seen a detailed design since the Public Information Centre at the King City Arena years ago,? commented Pellegrini.

?There are many unanswered questions as to access ( ramps), lighting and noise that need the addressed.?

Overall, Pellegrini was disappointed that the Township didn't have more information about the project.

?The communication has not been very good on this project,? said Pellegrini. ?It's just about ready to go now and it's too late to do anything about it.?

The Highway 400 Improvements have been divided into four contracts. Contract 1 goes from north of 19th Sideroad to 0.9 kilometre north of the South Canal bridge. Contract 2 includes the Lloydtown-Aurora Road interchange, underpass bridge replacement and ramp reconfiguration and localized mainline widening for staging. Contract 3 includes the 16th Sideroad overpass bridge replacement and localized mainline widening for staging and Contract 4 will see the widening of Highway 400 mainline from 0.9km north of King Road to south of Lloydtown-Aurora Road.

Construction of Contracts 2 and 3 could commence as early as 2017 (possibly as a combined contract), subject to receipt of property and environmental clearances and confirmation of funding.

The province will be funding this project, but cost estimates can't be revealed until the procurement process is complete.