

August 22, 2020

Hon. Jeff Yurek
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

RE: Greater Toronto Area West Corridor Project (HWY 413)

Dear Minister,

The Ontario government's proposed GTA West Corridor (Highway 413) is a redundant and unnecessary use of taxpayer dollars.

"Highway 413 is a bad investment for the citizens of Ontario. It would damage the environment, consume land for low-value uses, promote urban sprawl, not solve traffic congestion and move Ontario away from its climate change goals,"

Peter Miasek, President of Transport Action Ontario

Currently Highway 407 (another toll highway) is underused and there is an expansion project underway for the 401. Yet the province is proposing to build another east-west toll highway just 15 km away.

- Building a new highway gets more polluting cars on the road, and usually does nothing to relieve congestion over time. In fact, an [expert panel study](#) found the highway would only save drivers 30-60 seconds per trip.
- Building Highway 413 (also known as the GTA West) would cost Ontario taxpayers billions. And it would mean less money is available to invest in crucial public transit projects.
- Highway 413 would degrade the parts of the Credit River and Humber River watersheds that flow into Lake Ontario – a source of drinking water for millions of GTA residents.
- Highway 413 would be 50 km long and would pave over 2,000 acres of Class 1 and Class 2 farmland – among Ontario's most productive farmland.

After EA studies and a review by an expert panel the project was previously abandoned by the Ontario government as more innovative, cost-effective, long term, and sustainable solutions were proposed. These solutions were supported by surrounding municipalities and would propel the province forward, by promoting more sustainable, and resilient communities.

Growth and Innovation in Proposed Alternatives

A report released this week courtesy of Environmental Defense, Sustainable Vaughn and Transport Action Ontario demonstrates that investments in GO Transit, light rail, bus, and rapid transit projects in the western GTA could move four times as many people as the proposed Highway 413 at a comparable cost.

The transportation alternatives suggested in this report, together with innovative land use ideas like Brampton's *urban boulevard* concept, are a much better investment of tax dollars. In July 2020, Brampton Council voted unanimously in support of a walkable, bike-friendly, higher density, boulevard concept in place of the proposed Highway 413, reinforcing that the highway is a bad fit for the region.

Recommendations to this project include:

- Committed public transit investment, including full GO Regional Express Rail on the Kitchener and Milton corridors, a new GO corridor to Bolton, and increased bus rapid transit or light rail transit for Vaughan, Brampton and Mississauga.
- Transportation System Management and Transportation Demand Management – technical initiatives to improve the operational efficiencies of the existing transportation network.
- Increased rail/road grade separations to facilitate the movement of goods.
- Continued monitoring and modelling, especially as new regional population and employment figures are developed by the Province as input to upcoming Municipal Comprehensive Reviews, and as transportation technologies and economic practices evolve.

Truck Priority on Hwy 407

One solution highlighted by the expert panel's analyses showed that providing truck priority on Hwy 407 through additional highway capacity or subsidy (e.g., trucks pay no toll) would deliver travel time benefits that are similar to those of the proposed GTAW corridor.

Weighing the Risks

The adverse environmental impacts of a new transportation corridor of this size are significant, and include impacts to the natural environment such as rivers, wetlands and forests, loss of thousands of hectares of prime agricultural lands including about a thousand hectares in the Greenbelt, environmental damage from road salt, air pollution affecting nearby residents and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

We don't need another highway, more cars, and more pollution. Transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions in Ontario. In addition, [recent modeling](#) estimated that pollution from traffic causes almost 900 premature deaths per year in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

“The government has an outdated view of how to boost Ontario’s economy – a new highway, more sprawl, and more pollution isn’t the answer”

Keith Brooks, *Programs Director with Environmental Defence*

As our economy looks towards a strong recovery from the global pandemic, and without major tax increases, there is limited funds in the Province to support the construction of the GTA-West Highway while also investing in critical public transit infrastructure projects. Public transit infrastructure investment allows the Province to share the capital cost of projects with their municipal and federal counterparts while preparing for a low carbon future.

As we go through a shift in transportation technology, remote work options and climate change mandates, supporting another unnecessary highway project at the cost of future resilience, ecosystem services and public health while condemning future taxpayers to pay for an outdated model that was already deemed unjustified years ago seems at odds with progress. This project should not face any further consideration. Cancel it.

Marsha Smith
Chair, Sustainable Milton

Supporting Document Links

[ED Report](#)

[ED Press release](#)

[Town of Milton, 2011](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Transportation - Expert Panel Review](#)

[Transport Action - Brampton Boulevard Study](#)

[Ontario Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods - Letter Against HWY 413](#)

