

Friday, August 21, 2020

Antonia Testa
Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks
77 Bay Street, College Park 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

Public Works

10 Peel Centre Dr.
Suite B
Brampton, ON
L6T 4B9
tel: 905-791-7800

peelregion.ca

Re: Proposed regulation for a streamlined environmental assessment process for the Ministry of Transportation's Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor project (ERO #019-1882)

Ms. Testa:

Regional staff appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the details regarding the proposed regulation to streamline the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment outlined in ERO Posting #019-1882.

Throughout the last several years, the Region of Peel has been advocating to the Province to expedite the completion of the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) and move forward with construction in order to provide greater certainty around land use and transportation planning matters in Peel, minimize impacts to developable lands, improve the movement of people and goods and provide greater economic benefits.

Regional staff are pleased to note the Province's acknowledgement of the need to expedite the EA and support, in principle, the Province's efforts to shorten the timeline for the completion of the project. Notwithstanding, Regional staff would like to request additional details on the proposed regulation as the information provided in the ERO Posting did not provide insight as to how exactly specific processes would change. Receipt of these additional details would enable Regional staff to provide more fulsome comments on the proposed regulation. The Region's request for more information and clarification regarding the proposal are outlined below.

Streamlined EA Timelines

The existing GTA West EA schedule identifies that the EA is expected to be completed by 2022 however the ERO posting indicates that the streamlined approach would shorten the project schedule by completing preliminary design in 2022 instead of 2023 and beyond. If the current project schedule already identifies that the project should be completed by 2022, how does the proposed regulation and streamlined approach impact the current project schedule?

Streamlined Approach

The preliminary/detail design section of the posting identifies that the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) would be required to publish an Environmental Conditions

Public Works

10 Peel Centre Dr.
Suite B
Brampton, ON
L6T 4B9
tel: 905-791-7800

peelregion.ca

Report, an Environmental Impact Assessment report, an Early Works report and an addendum for the Early Works Report and the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. Additional information is needed from the Province on the chronology of these steps and what the process looks like.

Issues Resolution Process

The proposal identifies that the MTO would be required to develop an issues resolution process that replaces the public objections process and later states (under the “after detail design” section) that this process will be administered by the MTO.

Regional staff question whether this process is intended to replace the existing appeal process for individual EAs or whether this simply means that the Province will resolve all issues prior to the completion of the EA. Regional staff also seek further clarity on what is to be included in the proposed issues resolution process, how will it differ from the existing public objections process, and when stakeholders will be given an opportunity to raise objections.

Finally, if the proposed issues resolution process is intended to replace the existing appeal process for individual EAs, how does moving the process under the MTO from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks change the tests for evaluating the public’s objections and how will impartiality be maintained as the MTO is the proponent of the EA?

Advancement of Early Works

The proposal states that the regulation would permit early works to proceed to construction before the completion of the draft Environmental Impact Assessment Report and that these early works could include new bridge construction, bridge replacement or expansion, transitway station construction, and utility relocation. At what stage of the EA Process will early works be permitted to proceed and how will the Province ensure that any early works do not predetermine or unduly influence the final route alignment?

Further, Regional staff request that the Province coordinate and consult with municipalities on the advancement of any early works to ensure those areas are appropriate to be advanced, that they do not have major environmental or agricultural concerns, and that the activities are coordinated with municipal infrastructure planning.

Consultation Requirements

The proposal indicates that minor changes in the addendum could proceed without further consultation and that significant changes will require an opportunity for public comment. What distinguishes a minor change from a significant change?

Further, clarification is required as to what sections of the Environmental Assessment Act that provide for public participation will be amended by the Regulation and whether the proposed requirements for consultation with government agencies, stakeholders,

the public, and indigenous communities will be comparable, stronger, or weaker to those required by the environmental assessment process that the project is currently advancing under.

Other Comments

While Regional staff are generally supportive of the Province’s efforts to expedite the GTA West EA, it should be ensured that the environment and resources are appropriately considered and protected in decision making and implementation, and that impacted government agencies, stakeholders, the public, and indigenous communities are provided reasonable and adequate time to review and comment on any reports and documents developed throughout the EA process.

Regional staff also reiterate the need for the MTO to complete a traffic analysis, health impact assessment, agricultural impact assessment, and appropriate environmental evaluations in the preliminary design phase of the GTA West EA and ask that the Province confirm that the streamlined approach would not preclude these assessments from taking place and that these will be reflected in the Environmental Conditions Report, Environmental Impact Assessment report, and Early Works report.

Public Works

10 Peel Centre Dr.
Suite B
Brampton, ON
L6T 4B9
tel: 905-791-7800

peelregion.ca

Assessment	Purpose
Traffic Impact Assessment	To understand the impacts of the GTA West Corridor and interchange locations on the Regional and local road network
Health Impact Assessment	To understand the impacts of the GTA West Corridor on health outcomes including but not limited to the list below, and identify mitigative solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiovascular health; • Respiratory health; • Cancers associated with traffic-related air pollution and other transportation exposures; • Mental health; • Health equity and; • Injuries and death
Agricultural Impact Assessment	To understand the impacts of the GTA West Corridor and interchange locations on prime agricultural lands within the Region and identify opportunities for avoidance and minimizing or mitigating impacts.
Environmental Evaluations	To ensure that impacts to natural heritage features, sensitive groundwater features, sensitive surface water features, water resources, and prime agricultural lands are avoided if possible, and if avoidance is not possible, minimized or mitigated to the extent feasible.

The completion of the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment will provide greater certainty around land use and transportation planning initiatives

within the Region of Peel and such as the Region's Official Plan review and other documents related to growth management, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Water and Wastewater Master Plans.

Regional staff look forward to continuing to engage with the Province as the GTA West Transportation Corridor EA advances through preliminary and detailed design. Should you have any questions regarding the Region of Peel's submission or for more information, please contact Richa Dave at Richa.Dave@peelregion.ca.

Public Works

10 Peel Centre Dr.
Suite B
Brampton, ON
L6T 4B9
tel: 905-791-7800

peelregion.ca

Sincerely,



Tina Detaramani, MCIP, RPP
Manager, Sustainable Transportation and Strategic Initiatives