



KEY INFORMATION REPORT

Transportation Services

May 16, 2022

SUBJECT: Comments on the Province's Draft Transportation Plan for Eastern Ontario

BACKGROUND:

On April 21, the Province of Ontario released their draft transportation plan for Eastern Ontario, titled "*Connecting the East a draft transportation plan for eastern Ontario*". The transportation plan identifies 50 actions/priorities for provincial transportation infrastructure within our larger region (Muskoka to the Quebec border). These actions are intended to facilitate and support trade and economic growth, create system efficiencies, improve the connections between our communities and increase road safety.

The Eastern Ontario regional plan is one of the four master plans prepared by the Government of Ontario since 2020 (*Northern Ontario Transportation Plan, Southwestern Ontario Transportation Plan, Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan and Eastern Ontario Transportation Plan*). Together these plans will be used to guide the direction of the provincial transportation network over the next many years.

The Eastern Ontario plan identified several challenges and opportunities, namely:

- The need to solve the existing gridlock in the Ottawa area (Highway 417 & Highway 416)
- The importance of planning infrastructure improvements to address growth within our region
- The need for intercommunity bus services in rural areas
- The importance of supporting the trucking industry and the long-term requirement to widen the 401 corridor

A full copy of the study can be found at the following link:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/planning-transportation-eastern-ontario>



Some highlights of the actions proposed in the Eastern Ontario Plan which will directly impact our County are follows:

1) The rehabilitation of various highway structures within the 401 corridor (Action 4)

Staff are pleased to see that the province is continuing to invest in their infrastructure within SDG and appreciate that this is seen as a high priority action to undertake. Staff appreciate the engagement we receive from the Ministry in advance of this work and look forward to continuing to advocate for design considerations that will benefit our community (e.g., the continuation of paved shoulders, addressing traffic concerns).

2) The creation of a task force to improve rail, bus and transit services (Action 13)

Staff believe that our region should actively engage in this discussion to ensure that SDG, Cornwall and our neighbouring communities have options for public transit services.

3) Ensure that Highway interchanges are designed to accommodate Long Combination Vehicles LCV's (Action 18)

Improved design standards to accommodate LCV's are welcomed by SDG staff as this has the potential to encourage economic development within our region. The ability for LCV's to access and leave highway 401 creates competitive advantages for logistic companies as they are able to reduce the cost of transportation for their goods.

4) Consider mitigation measures when upgrading rail crossings to accommodate agricultural equipment/field access is not impeded (Action 21)

The challenge with rail crossings is a major concern to some farmers in SDG. Staff appreciate the province's desire to ensure that our agricultural community is considered.

5) Implement digital solutions for the commercial trucking industry (Action 22)

As Council is aware, SDG is the lead municipality receiving funding through the Municipal Modernization Fund to implement a digital permitting tool. Staff believe that this action dovetails into our work and look forward to engaging with the province further



6) Support Tourism through partnerships at the Bainsville ONroute Centre (Action 23)

Given that the Bainsville ONroute Center is within SDG, the County is in a unique position to partner with the province and actively promote tourism within SDG.

7) Support local airport sustainability (Action 24)

With its strategic location and current amenities, with additional provincial support, this airport has the potential to develop and grow into a greater resource to serve our region

8) Support the recovery and growth of the passenger cruise ship industry (Action 25)

SDG and the City of Cornwall are uniquely situated and have an opportunity to offer tourism possibilities for cruise ships operating along the St. Lawrence River.

9) Continue to support transit funding opportunities through the Ontario Community Transportation Grant Program (Action 28) and continue to make it easier to provide intercommunity bus services (Action 31)

As Council is aware, SDG lacks an intercommunity transit service. With continued support from the province, such a service may one day become feasible.

10) Work with the Federal Government to advance high frequency rail

SDG is strategically located on both a Montreal to Ottawa corridor and Montreal to Toronto corridor. Council and our local provincial and federal representatives must continue to advocate for our region to ensure that our area will be serviced by this future rail system

11) Prioritize and fund active transportation improvements (Action 34 and Action 36)

SDG is well known as a cycling destination – continued improvements, funding and future investments in SDG and its surrounding areas will undoubtedly benefit our region.

12) Adapt and respond to commercial vehicle safety priorities

Given the volume of commercial traffic on Highway 401 and the continued accidents/incidents which involve these vehicles; which impact our local first responders and secondary road network (during detours), any improvements to safety and enforcement will positively benefit SDG.



13) Address Wild Parsnip along Provincial Highways

For many years, SDG staff have been advocating that the Ministry should be taking a more proactive role in managing wild parsnip along its roadsides. Recognizing and taking action to address this noxious weed will assist SDG and its local municipalities in our continued work to manage this plant.

14) Consider agricultural equipment in future design standards

The province is often viewed as a leader in road design standards. Any improvements to current standards are likely to be adopted by the County and local municipalities, which will benefit our agricultural community.

COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

The Eastern Ontario Plan is considered by the province as a “living document”. The Ministry is looking for feedback from stakeholders in order to identify opportunities for improvement to this plan. Staff fully support the actions contained in this report and would recommend, with Council support that the County provide comments to the Ministry in this regard. In addition to providing our support, the County should advocate for some additional actions, namely:

1) To prioritize the completion of the Highway 138 improvements.

Highway 138 is an important transportation link between the City of Cornwall and various communities within SDG. Although the Ministry has indicated a prior commitment to undertaking this work in due course, staff are of the view that this important regional project should be clearly noted in the transportation master plan.

2) When circumstances warrant, to consider examining high volume arterial roads under jurisdiction of municipalities within Eastern Ontario to determine if they should be part of the province’s road network

Although SDG is currently well served by a mixture of local, arterial and provincial roads, as our population continues to grow, there may come a point in the future where additional provincial highways are needed. Given our well laid out road network system, it is more likely that an existing road would function better at the Provincial level rather than at a County or local level. Although staff do not believe that this is necessarily important for SDG at the given time, it still should be considered in the long term.

Staff are seeking Council’s input with the above and what next steps it would like to take (e.g. prepare a letter to the Minister, work with the City of Cornwall to prepare a joint response, work with North and South Stormont to advocate for Highway 138....)

Respectfully Submitted.