



CITIZENS OPPOSED TO PAVING THE ESCARPMENT

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Mr. Tyler Drygas
Senior Environmental Planner
NGTA Study Team
C/O URS Canada Inc
75 Commerce Valley Drive East
Markham, Ontario
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Re: Niagara to GTA Corridor PIC#3 Comments

Mr. Drygas,

Having reviewed the information presented at the NGTA Corridor P.I.C. #3, COPE submits these comments for your review and action.

1) High Priority of Environmental Considerations

COPE commends the Study Group's attention to a multi-modal approach to address transportation needs. The new global reality, including climate crisis, economic turmoil, peak oil and geo-political security shifts, demand correction of the practice of significantly damaging ecosystems in the course of building roads. The natural areas of the escarpment, including Flamborough, Niagara and Burlington, need to be protected.

Solutions to transportation problems need a full environmental cost accounting. Lost ecosystem services, along with the importance of the natural heritage system, must form part of any cost-benefit and evaluation criteria when considering transportation options as well as other building matters. Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, "Protecting What Sustains Us", provides guidelines in this vein.

2) Bolster Rail Network

For CO2 reduction, rail is key. In past decades, it has been under valued. In the midst of the current economic downturn, CN, CP and VIA have excess capacity

with no plans for expansion. **To ensure benefits of rail can be fully utilized when economic and attitudinal changes occur, existing rail tracks and rail right-of-ways need protection. Existing trucks-on-rails technology, such as RoadRailer and Expressway, should be maintained and improved. Advocacy for a comprehensive national and international goods transportation plan, recognizing the importance of rail, is needed as part of the overall transportation solution.** Rail expansion would be a proactive action; highways are reactive and lead to sprawl.

Optimizing the existing public transit network through Metrolinx, GO and MTO initiatives are steps in a positive direction. Currently, there is cultural indifference towards climate change. It must be recognized that a societal shift towards public transit will take time and that, when realized, the need will be dire. The groundwork must be laid now to meet that need.

Some public transit initiatives have designated funding. However, municipalities must not be left as weak links. **Long term funding for local transit providers must be part of the plan as a whole.**

3) Remove Group 4 from the NGTA Corridor options

Alternative Groups 1 and 2 have concrete benefits; they offer sustainable solutions to increase movement of people and goods. The need for, and benefits of, Groups 3 and 4 are not clear.

No consideration is given to the improvements generated by Groups 1 and 2 before leading to the conclusion that Group 3 and 4 are needed. Also not considered are:

- The parallel efforts by regions and municipalities to improve their local live-work ratios.
- New technology that is playing an increasing role in fostering home based employment and the resulting reduction in commutes.
- Slower growth in traditional manufacturing sectors and emergence of different economies.

The effects of Group 1 and 2 initiatives, and the changing world reality, have the potential to render the demand for Group 3 and Group 4 scenarios questionable. By the study group's own admission, Group 4 will be offering redundancy.

Proceed with Group 3 once the impact of Groups 1 and 2 are realized and the need is demonstrated.

Remove Group 4 from the process as an option.

4) Urban Sprawl and Creation of a Ring Road

The reference to possible economic development suggested in Group 4 is outdated thinking. Group 4 is an opportunity to create additional urban sprawl. In addition to the NGTA corridor, other corridors are being planned including Regional Road 24 (424 corridor) and the GTA West Corridor. When viewed as a whole, they form a Ring Road around the Golden Horseshoe. Due to the status as separate projects, a full environment assessment of the cumulative impact of such a monstrous undertaking has not been completed.

Given the magnitude of the projects when combined, a full environmental assessment on all sections is warranted.

COPE appreciates the high level of effort and research that has gone into the NGTA process. Unfortunately, there is still a surprising level of cultural denial pertaining to the climate crisis. It is our sincere hope and expectation that our government, and it's many arms, exercise due diligence in creating sustainable transportation for the years to come. **As such, COPE is opposed to any scenario that includes building a new highway corridor or inflicts a new cut on the Niagara Escarpment.**

Sincerely,

Susan McMaster and Dave Bailey
Co-Chairs
Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment