

# Oak Park Road Extension Virtual PIC #1

## Questions and Answers Transcript

December 18, 2020

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### Introduction

Welcome to the question and answer video for the Oak Park Road Extension Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study Virtual Public Information Centre #1.

This video can be viewed in full screen mode by selecting the bottom right full-screen icon and a PDF of this presentation and a transcript of the audio can also be downloaded from the City's project webpage.

### Overview

The City of Brantford is undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) to study an extension of Oak Park Road between the Kramer's Way / Hardy Road intersection and Colborne Street West.

The first Virtual Public Information Centre (PIC) was held online beginning November 27, 2020 with the PIC comment period closing on December 11, 2020.

To date, the project team has received approximately 100 comments from the virtual PIC.

The project team is working to provide individual responses to all those who provided input. All individual comments are expected to be responded to starting the week of December 21st and completed by January 2021.

Input is welcomed at all phases of the Environmental Assessment Study and the comment form remains open on the City's project website at [www.Brantford.ca/OakParkRoad](http://www.Brantford.ca/OakParkRoad).

### Questions and Answers

This presentation provides responses to commonly asked questions received at the first Public Information Centre.

There are a total of three (3) additional Public Information Centres planned for this Environmental Assessment.

#### **Question #1. Is the City's plan to construct the Oak Park Road Extension considered a "done deal" and will there be additional opportunities for public input?**

The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process seeks to identify alternative planning solutions (including a comparison to a "Do Nothing" scenario) and alternative design concepts for the preferred planning solution.

The process is intended to be open and transparent and public input is highly encouraged to be provided at any time during the study and is not strictly limited to only Public Information Centres or formal comment periods.

The Study is currently in Phase 2 of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process where a preferred alternative solution will be determined.

Phase 3 of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Process will seek to identify a range of alternative design concepts for the preferred solution. If an extension of Oak Park Road is identified as the preferred solution, several alternative design options for the corridor would be prepared. These will be presented to the public for review and input at additional Public Information Centres planned for this project in 2021.

Upon completion of the Environmental Assessment, which is tentatively scheduled for late 2021, recommendations from the study including any preferred design options will be subject to City Council review and decision. The Environmental Study Report (ESR) would also be subject to a mandatory 30-day public review period.

**Question #2. Has the City engaged with Indigenous Communities as part of the project consultation process?**

The City of Brantford has engaged with the Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation communities on this project. Two (2) meetings have been held thus far with both representatives of the Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

The City has committed to regular meetings with representatives from both Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation throughout the course of the study to keep their respective communities updated on study progress and findings and has agreed to share all relevant technical reports with them for their review and their inputs.

**Question #3. What are the expected impacts to the Oakhill Cemetery?**

The City of Brantford is sensitive to families who have an association with the Oakhill Cemetery, which is owned and operated by the City. Ensuring the safe operation and continued access to Oak Hill Cemetery is a key priority and major consideration in the Environmental Assessment.

Additionally, the plan for this transportation corridor has been part of the City's overall Transportation Master Plan and Official Plan for many years and it was necessary to consider the eventual plan to develop this corridor as part of the Oak Hill Cemetery's Master Plan in 1990 prior to its opening in 1993.

Since the corridor is recognized in the Cemetery Plan, there are no existing grave sites nor future plots that would be impacted with any potential alignment in the vicinity of the Cemetery.

If an extension of Oak Park Road is identified as the preferred solution, the alternative design concepts will take into consideration the need for continued access to the Cemetery and safe connectivity between the components of the Cemetery that would be located on both sides of the transportation corridor.

The anticipated visual and/or aesthetic impacts to the Oakhill Cemetery under various alternatives will be presented at future Public Information Centres planned for this project.

**Question #4. What are the expected impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitats including short term and long-term effects? There are many habitats in the study area that should be considered.**

If an extension of Oak Park Road were to be selected as the preferred solution, some impact to the local natural environment and habitats would occur as part of the construction of Oak Park Road. However, the protection, preservation and, if possible, the enhancement of existing wildlife habitats within the study area is a key objective of the Environmental Assessment. Some of the mitigation measures could include wildlife exclusion fencing, wildlife culvert crossings and the creation of offsetting habitat areas.

For any alternative with construction, the City would require permits from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), all of whom will require that the final designs be in compliance with the latest federal and provincial regulations protecting, to the furthest extent possible and practical, any identified Species-at-Risk (SAR) and their habitats.

As part of this study, the consultant team is undertaking detailed inventories of the area terrestrial and aquatic habitats and working to identify any Species-at-Risk (SAR) or other significant environmental features such as wetland areas that might be directly or indirectly impacted by the project. This information will be documented in the Natural Environment Impact Study Report for this Environmental Assessment.

Potential impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitats and mitigation measures will be presented at future Public Information Centres for this project.

**Question #5. What information can be provided on the Grand River and Oakhill Cemetery Cultural Heritage Resources? Will data from the future archaeological test pit investigations be provided?**

The Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment is underway and the Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment will be conducted in 2021 for areas of potential archaeological interest and that are within the influence of the preferred solution.

Technical studies conducted for this study and their accompanying reports, including further archaeological and cultural heritage assessments are anticipated to be provided in approximately June/July 2021. These reports will be submitted to the MHSTCI for review and will also be appended to the final Environmental Study Report (ESR) prepared for this project following completion of the Environmental Assessment Study.

These technical studies will contain findings and/or recommendations for additional work or mitigation measures to be considered. Key findings from the investigations will also be shared at future Public Information Centres and on the City's website for this study.

**Question #6. Can combining alternative solutions 2-6 be considered as a single solution?**

Alternatives 2 to 6 will be considered as a single solution and a detailed evaluation will be presented at Public Information Centre #2.

For the assessment of alternatives, it is worth noting that certain criteria may be weighted higher and that scores are not necessarily additive, meaning that combining alternatives may not translate into better scores on certain criteria nor overall.

**Question #7. What do the symbols on the alternative slide mean?**

Symbols were developed to evaluate the alternative planning solutions. Full circles are intended to resemble a score closer to 100% where potential impacts within a given criteria are reduced or can be mitigated. For example, Alternative solution #7 (constructing a new crossing over the grand river) scores well against the transportation criteria since it would help improve the existing and future transportation network. For the transportation criteria under Alternative solution #1 (do-nothing), it is evaluated as a red circle (major flaw) since there would be no improvements to the existing and future transportation network.

**Question #8. GPS calculations identify a route between West Brant and the east (e.g. Hamilton and Burlington) over the Lorne Bridge onto Brant Avenue to access Highway 403. Who travels further west to go east?**

GPS comparisons only assess existing routes under existing traffic conditions and do not consider long term planning objectives to accommodate growth that are identified.

**Question #9. Has the City considered an investigation into "Reversible Lanes" on Brant Avenue and the Veterans Memorial Parkway over the River?**

While reversible lanes have been used in some contexts in other jurisdictions, they are neither feasible nor a solution for providing additional transportation network capacity and addressing requirements identified in the Problem and Opportunity Statement.

Reversible lanes are typically used when there are ideal geometric conditions and a disproportionate amount of traffic volume heading in one direction during peak periods that can justify a temporary increase in capacity. On Brant Avenue and Paris Road, there is a high frequency of side streets where left turn movement conflicts would be present and future traffic demand will be over capacity in both directions.

On Veterans Memorial Parkway, higher posted speed limits do not warrant reversible lanes and the two-lane approaches to the bridge over the Grand River are not compatible with reversible lanes where a minimum of 3 lanes are needed. The westbound on-ramp from Market Street would also need to be maintained on the bridge and could not be used as a reversible lane.

**Question #10. Why consider potentially impacting Archaeological resources, crossing the Haldimand Tract along the Grand River against Indigenous communities' wishes? Why potentially risk the understanding and respect of Indigenous interests?**

The intent of this Environmental Assessment Study is to identify and assess a range of alternative solutions that address the requirements as outlined in the Problem and Opportunity Statement for the project.

As part of that assessment process the Study Team will work with stakeholders and Indigenous communities to receive their input and identify solutions and potential mitigation measures for the preferred solutions and designs. Participation of stakeholders and Indigenous communities is an important part of the successful completion of this Environmental Assessment.

**Question #11. What is the forecasted rate payer tax % increase for this project?**

As per Council's directive in June 2019 (report 2019-384), the City is committed to keeping taxes affordable and ensuring that tax increases do not exceed inflation. For any alternative with construction, some funding through taxes would be required, the construction would also be funded from Development Charges (DC), as the roadway would provide significant benefits to the development community. The next iteration of the DC study will be conducted in 2021 with consideration of the recommendations from the 2020 Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

**Question #12. Why has the City not published their study directly comparing the forecast traffic benefits, cost, timing and environmental and indigenous impacts of each of the subject traffic flow options from West Brant?**

All technical studies, including the Transportation Assessment for this Study will be made available to the public and appended to the final Environmental Study Report expected to be completed by November/December 2021. Please also refer to the City's [2020 Transportation Master Plan Update](#) which provides additional context and background on this project and other transportation recommendations to address the City's forecasted growth.

**Question #13. Do traffic calculations used by the City take into account that many new residents to the southwest may now be remote workers rather than commuters?**

This Environmental Assessment will provide recommendations that consider present traffic conditions as well as solutions that will help Brantford respond to traffic demands to 2041, as per the recommendations in the City's 2020 Transportation Master Plan. It is extremely challenging to quantify how many residents in any given area work remotely, how consistent that number is moving forward, and how many future residents of southwest Brantford may work remotely.

**Question #14. Would having a better mix of retail, services & jobs in the southwest reduce traffic and the need to get across the river?**

The City of Brantford's Official Plan identifies areas in southwest Brantford for development that are expected to include a mix of residential, institutional, retail and commercial service uses with related employment growth. While these developments will primarily service the residents of southwest Brantford, they could also attract traffic from other areas of the City and beyond. Therefore, introducing more retail, services and jobs in the southwest would not in itself eliminate the need for additional transportation network capacity.

**Question #15. \$100 million is the estimate in the Transportation Master Plan for construction, but what is the full cost of ownership over the lifespan of the bridge (likely 40 years or more). What would the cost of financing the \$100 million be, what would yearly maintenance amount to? A total cost of ownership number (TCO) is essential.**

While the Feasibility Study (2019) provided for a preliminary estimate for a construction alternative, a more accurate cost estimate, including life-cycle cost analysis (LCCA) will be developed later in the Environmental Assessment process for the preferred solution. LCCA would include estimated costs for yearly maintenance and operating, should a construction alternative be selected.

**Question #16. How specifically will the Tufa Mounds ANSI, perched fens and Davisville Swamp Provincially Significant Wetland in the area be protected?**

The Tufa Mounds and Perched Fens are currently outside the study area being considered for the Oak Park Road Extension. If an extension of Oak Park Road is identified as the preferred solution, options to avoid Provincially Significant Wetlands will be considered and evaluated in Phase 3 of the Environmental Assessment process.

**Question #17. How will the drinking water supply for the City be protected? There will be salty/contaminated runoff from the roadway - where will this go? What mitigation strategy is to be adopted to prevent toxic spills from transport trucks going over the bridge damaging the water supply for us and downstream communities? How will the City deal with fluid leakage from vehicles including spills and potential impacts to the ecosystem of the study area?**

If an extension of Oak Park Road is identified as the preferred solution, current standards for roadway design will be reviewed. Run-off would be contained within the curbs and directed to stormwater management facilities where quality and quantity would be addressed. A key component of this Environmental Assessment process would be developing mitigation measures for roadway run-off. The preferred approach for accommodating run-off would be presented at future Public Information Centres, depending on the alternatives being evaluated, and refined further during the detailed engineering design phase.

**Question #18. What does the City intend to do about noise pollution arising from trucks rumbling down grade with engine breaks on?**

If an extension of Oak Park Road is identified as the preferred solution, the introduction of several thousand vehicles annually would be expected to increase noise levels and the noise levels at the adjacent receptors will be quantified as part of the study in a Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment in June/July 2021.

In addition, the study will also review and recommend measures to mitigate the identified noise impacts on adjacent properties and community facilities. These measures may include, but not necessarily be limited to, tree plantings, berms, naturalized landscaping and possibly noise walls. The preferred mitigation measures will be presented at future Public Information Centres for this project.

**Question #19. Will there be impacts to the existing Active Transportation network including trails? Impacts to the existing trail network should be considered in the evaluation.**

Impacts to the existing trail network will be considered during the Environmental Assessment Study.

Should an extension of Oak Park Road be identified as the preferred solution, enhancements to the existing trail network will be a key priority including crossing opportunities of the Grand River. Temporary access requirements during construction would also be considered.

The preferred Active Transportation design for the study area will be presented at future Public Information Centres to be held for this project.

**Question #20. For alternative solution #7 which includes a new crossing of the Grand River, how did the City determine that it would have moderate impacts to private property and noise/vibration/aesthetics. This should be counted as a major flaw and least desirable. Environmental criteria should also be weighed with higher impacts.**

The City welcomes input on the evaluation of alternative planning solutions.

Impact to private properties and subsequent mitigation measures will be considered during this Environmental Assessment. "Moderate" property impacts are those impacts that may require small property acquisition or easements for road grading or minor works, but do not significantly alter the current uses of properties. High impacts would be defined as alternatives where there is high potential for property acquisition or easements with significant changes to current property use.

Since the Oak Park Road extension study area includes a protected corridor for a future roadway, impacts could be reduced if that alignment were to be utilized.

Potential property impacts and subsequent mitigation measures to address factors such as noise, for the various alternatives will be presented at future Public Information Centres planned for this project. Information on environmental mitigation will also be presented.

**Question #21. Since Parsons has done 3D images of the project, can they provide further renderings showing what it would look like along the route at ground level in places like the cemetery, Oakhill neighborhood and crossing the river?**

If an extension of Oak Park Road is selected as the preferred solution, this information would be prepared as part of the evaluation of alternative design concepts in Phase 3 of the Environmental Assessment process and will be shared at future Public Information Centres to be held for the project.

**Question #22. Is the City considering pushing this roadway further south and connecting with Shellard Lane?**

No. The limits for this Environmental Assessment currently end at Colbourne Street West.

**Question #23. Has the project team considered the long term impact of climate change on the structure? We can expect more rain, more flooding over the next century, does the design consider this? Also, what impact on flooding will the structure itself have - for instance creating ice dams that can burst and head downstream?**

Climate Change and Sustainability are key criteria being used to assess this project.

A major evaluation criterion for the installation of any new bridge crossing is the limitation of upstream impacts to the regional floodplain limits and this project would be no exception. Alternatives for a bridge structure would identify measures to mitigate ice jamming that might result from the installation of bridge piers and/or abutments within the Grand River floodplain.

In addition, should an alternative with a bridge be selected, the Environmental Assessment will consider 100-year storm events for bridge design and will be in accordance with the Canadian Highway Bridge Design Code. The bridge design would also consider regulatory flood limits set by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

**Question #24. Will the City be applying for federal or provincial infrastructure funding assistance to build the OPRE?**

The possibility of additional funding sources would be reviewed by the City following the development of cost estimations for the preferred alternative and completion of the Environmental Assessment.

**Question #25. Why did the City select the Oak Park Road Extension to have its Environmental Assessment proceed over other Alternate Routes (i.e. Rest Acres, County Road 18, Brant Ave)?**

Completing the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Oak Park Road Extension has been identified as a key recommendation of the City's current and previous Transportation Master Plan (TMP) that identifies the infrastructure necessary to meet the demands of the city's forecasted growth.

Essentially, the proposed extension between the Kramer's Way / Hardy Road intersection and Colborne Street West would provide a third Grand River crossing for residents, businesses and visitors.

The additional river crossing would be located in an area upstream of the two existing crossings near the City's core, ultimately providing an alternative crossing in the event of an emergency requiring closure of the existing crossings.

### **Question #26. Why is crossing the Glebe lands no longer being considered as an option?**

At the August 27, 2019, Council Meeting, Brantford City Council passed a resolution to exclude the use of the Glebe Lands in the transportation alternatives being developed for the city as part of the City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) update.

### **Next Steps**

In early 2021, the project team will continue with the following steps in the Environmental Assessment:

- Respond to individual comments received from virtual Public Information Centre #1
- Complete detailed inventory of the natural, social and economic environment;
- Hold follow-up meetings with Indigenous communities, technical advisory committees and project stakeholders;
- Conduct the detailed evaluation of alternative solution(s);
- Confirm the preferred alternative planning solution(s); and
- Present the preferred alternative planning solution and next steps in the project at Public Information Centre #2.

Public input is welcomed at any point through the Environmental Assessment Process. To be added to the project contact list to receive updates and future public notices, please contact Evie Przybyla, City Project Manager or Marko Paranosic, Consultant Project Manager at [OakParkRoadExt@brantford.ca](mailto:OakParkRoadExt@brantford.ca).