

Feb 24th, 2021

City of Mississauga Council,
300 City Centre Dr,
Mississauga, ON., L5B 3C1.

Re: Agenda Item GTAW Transportation Corridor

Good Morning Mayor Crombie and Mississauga Councillors.

I am speaking today to address concerns about the proposed GTA West Corridor, or the Mega-Super-Sprawl Highway known as the 413. I am a former resident of Mississauga who grew up and attended school in this community. My family still lives in Mississauga. This morning, I am asking Council to consider three requests below:

You may have seen the article on the front page of the business section of the Toronto Star Saturday February 13th. "Doug Fords Planned GTA West Superhighway is a slam dunk for developers but some say it could also be an economic disaster" While the Region of Peel has been planning for housing and job markets, the trucking industry, aggregate proposals, Ward Boundary Reviews and Official Plans, many of us have been in lockdown with variable internet, especially in rural parts of Caledon, unable to participate in public meetings. The Province of Ontario has passed sweeping legislation in Covid Recovery Bills that now exclude public participation in decisions that will impact us for the next thirty years. I ask you now to consider the full economic value of the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and the Holland Marsh. We are now facing an ever-changing world within a Global Pandemic and a Global Climate Emergency, which you yourselves declared on June 19th, 2019.

My requests are that council:

- 1) Support cancelling Highway 413.**
- 2) Request a full Federal and Provincial EA should the highway proceed.**
- 3) Officially request that the Federal Government conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed highway as has been done by Ecojustice Canada on behalf of Environmental Defence and the Town of Halton Hills¹**
- 4) Request and consider a cost/benefit analysis from the Auditor General's Office on the GTAW corridor and the Bradford Bypass in King Township**

¹ Environmental Defence, News Release: Groups request the federal government conduct environmental assessments for two proposed Ontario highways on environmentally sensitive land. 3 Feb, 21. See: <https://environmentaldefence.ca/2021/02/03/groups-request-federal-government-conduct-environmental-assessments-two-proposed-ontario-highways-environmentally-sensitive-land/>

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Public Consultation, Awareness and Feedback

As Peel residents learn more about the highway thanks to efforts from reporters from the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, the Pointer, and the Caledon Enterprise and Citizen, and the Mississauga News, they are starting to understand that the 413 is not actually a corridor but a 400 series mega-highway, if not larger in width than the 400, 401, or 407, it would have multiple interchanges comparable or perhaps larger in size.¹ ^{II}. It is concerning that it may be yet another toll road if it follows the history of the 407. The recent discovery that the Province also intends to build the Bradford Bypass, or the HOLLAND MARSH EXPRESSWAY has woken many to the realization that the Greenbelt is “open for business”^{III}

Citizens are alarmed that the proposed GTA West Corridor is in the environmental assessment stage 2 of such a large infrastructure project without appropriately consulting the community. Caledon Council not only endorsed the highway, but endorsed fast-tracking it, while residents in Peel and the Toronto Region were in lockdown. On December 3rd, every council member, except for Councillor Groves and Councillor Rosa, voted in favour of expediting a 400 series highway by supporting a staff report while the world struggled and still struggles to contain the COVID 19 virus. This is a multi-billion-dollar project that will fundamentally change the local character of communities, bring more traffic and air pollution into and through Caledon, the carbon sink of the GTA. It will destroy prime farmland and environmentally sensitive lands, and fragment and isolate the community, farms, and wildlife. It will be a scar right through the breadbasket. There are members of the community that are only realizing now the impact this will have on their neighbourhoods, their health, and their food security. Continually our elected representatives promote the importance of community engagement and accountable and transparent government yet the same councillors who support the highway supported an MZO for Mayfield West Stage 2 Phase 2, resulting perhaps in a diminished voice for residents of Caledon in Regional affairs.²

Where is the transparency? When decisions are made that will impact taxpayers for the next thirty years or more, the public is excluded^{IV} ^V. The Province's GTA Project West's established e-mail has not sent a single communication update since the release of the preliminary design last August and does not respond to e-mails. To throw your hands up in the air and blame the Province and say you have no choice is not true. The Province may still construct the highway but that does not mean that you do not have a choice whether to support it or not.

² <https://www.mississauga.com/opinion-story/10323296-support-for-highway-413-will-haunt-mississauga-for-decades/>

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Declaring a Climate Emergency Contradicts the 413

Support for the highway is not consistent with public feedback, nor with the Official Plan Review nor is it consistent with the warnings put forward by the Town of Caledon's own Staff Climate Change expert on June 30th. that the GTA West Transportation "Corridor" will make the climate emergency worse in Caledon^{VI}.

I will quote the article that appeared in the Toronto Star Saturday February 13th, 2021.

"The real estate and construction industries have monopolized the discussion about this project long enough. Buchanan says. The agriculture, food, tourism, and recreational industries deserve to be heard too. This project puts tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of economic activity in those sectors at risk."

Allan Ehrlick President of the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture that represents 480 farmers states "Its an outdated throwback to an earlier era when farms, rural communities and nature itself were all merely the raw materials for unrestricted urban growth" he says. "But the COVID pandemic has now drastically changed the way people work. And that's reduced the need for a superhighway."

Kathryn Enders, Director of the Farmland Trust which helps farmers permanently protect their land from real estate development says "A rapidly growing number of farmers have now decided that future generations of people will never complain that we fought to protect their food supply."

Janet Horner the Mayor of Mulmur states the new superhighway will be "a disaster for the region's agricultural economy".

On December 17th, 2019, Caledon council held an open vote on a proposal to endorse a report from Caledon staff "Staff Report 2019-0256: Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment Study-Stage 2 Process Update" and send it to the government of Ontario. A vote that accepts staff recommendations is a decision to support the highway.

On Wednesday February 17th, one day after my delegation to Caledon council the Mayor of Caledon posted a letter to the public. In that post he stated that completing the Environmental Assessment was important because.

The study had been underway for several years and was substantially complete

Millions of tax dollars had been spent

The findings and information from the EA are valuable for the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel for infrastructure and other growth-related planning.

However, the motions put forward after my delegation were:

1)That the mayor write a letter to the Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation, requesting that the Ministry host a public information centre for Caledon residents for the purpose of

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receiving and answering public questions and addressing concerns related to the Provinces 'confirmed GTA West Multimodal Transportation Corridor.

2)That the Mayor write a letter to the Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister, requesting that the Federal Government conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed highway as has been done by Ecojustice Canada on behalf of Environmental Defence and the Town of Halton Hills.

3)Support for a Voluntary Project Review from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

A provincial public meeting is a requirement of an Environmental Assessment. The walk on motion for a Voluntary Project Review from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority put forward by Councillor Innis is non-binding and can be cancelled by the M.T.O.

Community members are not asking for mega-highways or new roads, they are asking for better transit, to utilize existing infrastructure, to make transportation healthier, more climate friendly and for walkable communities that promote active transportation. ^{VII VIII}

In an article published this past weekend by The Pointer "Plowing a highway through the green heart of Ontario when the natural world has been our pandemic oasis." By Joel Wittnebel he writes that the Greenbelt is where "the Headwaters that feed the land occupied by more than half of Ontario's residents are protected...local parks and nearby trail systems have become a mental escape for the tired and weary." It is not that those opposed are saying Not In My Backyard. In fact, we are saying **Not In Yours**. During the pandemic the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine have been THE destination for thousands of Ontario Citizens exhausted by lockdown needing respite who do not have the luxury of cottages. Where would they have gone if there was yet another cement barrier to the countryside?

Local Traffic and Public Health

The highway will create negative community impacts; The Town of Caledon is proceeding as if the highway is approved by endorsing MZO's during a pandemic. There has been no acknowledgement of the public health burden that could be forced upon residents by supporting the highway. With an estimation of 300,000 trips per day, what does that mean for local air quality and pollution? Have municipalities requested a Health Impact Assessment? Are you aware that there has been no analysis of potential health impacts completed by the Province of Ontario?^{IX}

The Justification for the Proposed Solution is Flawed

The EA process has been heavily criticized. In 2017, an Advisory Panel concluded that the EA was fundamentally flawed on needs and alternatives and did not demonstrate that it was the only option to address regional transportation needs. All the information and studies supporting the highway, including the demand analysis, are

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outdated by more than 10 years.^X (pg. 16) Our lives have changed, and people are forced to embrace working from home and online. We can not predict or know yet how this may impact transportation habits and needs. In fact, a report from Transport Ontario stated that the 2018 Advisory Panel noted that future travel demand is very much more uncertain than when the EA was initiated ten years ago. The panel indicated that a preferred planning approach would be to:

"develop a single unified transportation plan for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe that would align with provincial policies and **explicitly** consider uncertainty".

The panel supported the EA study with regard to investment in transit and rail and optimizing the existing transportation network.

This view is also supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in its report, "Moving Forward – Towards a Strategic Approach to Ontario's Transportation Needs."³

In May 2020, a presentation to Ontario Ministers from industry groups representing the Residential and Commercial Construction Industry contained a recommendation to accelerate approvals of the GTA West Corridor and other key pieces of infrastructure, in order to 'unlock housing supply' and create more certainty of future housing supply. In July 2020, the province released legislative changes to fast track the EA approvals under the blanket of economic recovery from COVID 19. The development pressure on local governments will be insurmountable and local councils will not be able to resist, especially in the absence of provincial support. Speculation has already commenced based on a Commercial Real Estate analysis, suggesting prime agricultural land is, and will be, developable around the Highway 413.⁴

We are still losing five farms a week to development in Ontario. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has not opposed the highway but has requested that an Agricultural Impact Assessment be completed. This has not been addressed by the Province.

Climate resiliency like natural cooling, storm-water protection, and carbon sequestration is increasingly recognized as crucial to our health and wellbeing and are weakened and undermined by this highway. This will translate into costs, borne by municipalities, for engineered treatment of drinking water and storm-water protection, not to mention the increasing health burdens of extreme heat, and poor air and water quality.

³ <https://occ.ca/moving-forward-towards-a-strategic-approach-to-ontarios-transportation-needs-part-1/>

⁴ Susan Lloyd Swail, a land-use planner based in Nobleton near the highway's proposed route, says that pressure is growing to rezone agricultural lands for development. "Agricultural land is valued as low as \$18,000 an acre, but residential land is easily worth \$1 million an acre," she says. "There are hundreds of millions of dollars to be made right now simply by rezoning farmlands around the new freeway into development lands. And there are billions more to be made in the future from developing those lands into ever more unsustainable sprawl when we should be building-up in our existing urban areas." Paul Webster Toronto Star Feb 13 2021

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The Provincial government has changed almost every piece of Ontario's environmental legislation to its detriment⁵ so local governments must be stronger. Therefore, reliance on the province for leadership on environmental protection and climate change is meaningless and it is foolish to think otherwise. Council cannot say they are “committed to strong and urgent action on Climate Change, preservation of the Greenbelt and prime agriculture” and also support the super sprawl highway without question. It is a contradiction. If Council continues to support the highway then the statement you are in fact making to your constituents is that you don't care about Climate Change or the Greenbelt or prime agricultural land. Governments need to act urgently and take decisive action. Council's continual and unwavering support for a questionable mega-400-series highway combined with continual attempts to rezone and redesignate Greenbelt land and endorsing excessive and unnecessary developer requests for MZOs forces me to question whose interests are you representing: Those of your communities or those of developers? I do not believe that the majority of your constituents want a 400 series mega-highway that will pave over farmlands, wetlands, forests, drive climate change, and impede meaningful climate action. I do believe residents want better transportation options, more walkable communities, and better transit.

On Thursday February 11th, the Ontario Liberals joined the Green Party and the NDP in their promise to cancel Highway 413, if elected, and invest instead in mass transit projects. On the same day Peel Regional Council moved to question the 413-implementation strategy, Patrick Brown the Mayor of Brampton has stated that “he views Highway 413 as “contrary to Brampton's economic interest”. He is urging Caledon and Vaughan to look at the economics too. Caledon has yet to commission any expert economic studies on the long-term impacts on agriculture, tourism and outdoor activities. Halton Region has withdrawn support for the highway as has the Town of Orangeville and MP Michael Chong

I ask that you reverse support for this destructive and controversial highway. I ask that Council request the Federal Government to conduct a thorough and comprehensive environmental assessment; to ensure a transparent and accountable process for Caledon residents.

I request that Council request a full cost/benefit analysis of the Hwy 413 and Bradford By-pass, from the Auditor General for Ontario's Office.

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Le Forestier

Note: this letter will be forwarded to applicable Provincial MPPs, Federal MPs and local Councillors, the Auditor General for Ontario, and the Ontario Ombudsman's Office.

⁵ <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1882>

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End notes

^I Community Value Plan Meeting #2 Nov 3, 2020 see Slides 11, 16-20: <https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CVP-Meeting-2-Presentation.pdf>

^{II} https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Technically-Preferred-Route-By-Section_Aerial-Photography-Background.pdf

^{III} [Doug Ford plans to open-up 'big chunk' of Greenbelt for development](#)

^{IV} [Town of Caledon Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Designated Boards---Corporate-Policy.](#)

^V <https://pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=7873>

^{VI} [Climate Change Emergency Modelling Results](#)

RECOMMENDATION That the Town adopt a community greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target of net zero by 2050 as part of the ongoing Community Climate Change Action Plan (CCCAP) update; and That an interim 2030 community emissions reduction target be developed.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Council Resolution 2020-10 declared a climate emergency in Caledon and directed staff to report back on the actions required by the Town and community to reduce local GHG emissions in line with the 1.5°C warming scenario, as recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This report summarizes the results of GHG emissions modelling to determine how Caledon can achieve a target of net zero emissions by 2050, which aligns with the 1.5°C warming scenario.
- Caledon's (Town and community's) GHG emissions for the baseline year of 2016 were 507 kilotonnes (kt), with transportation being the largest source of emissions, followed by residential building energy.

^{VII} <https://pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8497>

^{VIII} <https://pub-caledon.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=10392>

^{IX} Pg. 16: <https://www.gta-west.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GTA-West-Travel-Demand-Backgrounder-v1- red.pdf>
[Residential and Commercial Construction Industry Government of Ontario's Post COVID-19 Recovery Construction to Kick Start Ontario's Economy - Proposed Liquidity and Recovery Measures. 19 May, 20](#)
<https://bildgta.ca/Assets/BILD%20OHBA%20CHBA%20FInal%20OJRC%20-%20June%202.pdf>

^XMay, 2017 - GTA West Corridor Advisory Panel Report

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190618163558/http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/gta-west-report/executive-summary.shtml#conc>