

MEETING MINUTES



MEETING DATE	River Systems Advisory Committee October 8, 2015
LOCATION TIME	City Hall - Meeting Room C 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
MEMBERS PRESENT	Mariette Pushkar (Chair), Nicola Lower, Eric Wilson, Ryan VanEngen, April Weppler, Ian McCormick, Beth Anne Fischer, Jeremy Shute
STAFF PRESENT	April Nix, Prachi Patel, Abby Watts, Phillip Rowe (Burnside), Nicole Smith (Burnside), Chris Fowle (Burnside)
MEMBERS ABSENT	Javier Acosta

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM #	DESCRIPTION
1	<p>Welcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll call and certification of quorum- met • Declaration of pecuniary interest or conflict of interest – None
2	<p>Niska Road EA</p> <p>A. April Nix, City of Guelph Environmental Planner, presented the City Staff Report to the RSAC Committee.</p> <p>Committee Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments haven't been received from GRCA but they have had involvement through the working group as a regulatory authority <p>B. Phillip Rowe, from Burnside, provided a presentation to the RSAC Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently at Phase 3 of the EA Process • At phase 4 start working on preliminary designs • Provided a list of the reports that were required as part of the EA process and explained that they need to look at all elements of the project in order to find a balance • Consultant team reviewed community concerns and concerns have been captured through community working group meetings. Main concerns revolve around the bridge, speed, volume of traffic, truck traffic, safety, access, sidewalks, protection of wildlife, traffic calming measures, etc. • Consultant team summarized the project elements associated with the bridge, road, type of design options under Phase 3 and preferred option, and Natural Heritage System (Wetland delineation and associated terrestrial ecology, and aquatic assessment).

- Brief review of structural instability of the existing bridge and overview of the estimated remaining life of 1 to 2 years
- Review of Ontario Bridge Code and Canadian Bridge Code and the associated strong recommendations for lanes to be designed according to traffic volumes
- Review of 2 lane option- conforms to Official Plan, obligation to manage road network in an effective way
- Brief review of the road element and discussion related to existing ditch and erosion and sediment concerns, parking issues and pavement deteriorating, and the need for reconstruction.
- Review of road reconstruction design options: urban cross-section, rural cross-section and semi-urban cross-section
- Intersection reconstruction options: signalized intersection or round-about
- Nicole Smith reviewed the terrestrial ecology studies conducted for the environmental assessment including the wetland delineation and associated terrestrial ecology elements including wildlife passage and tree inventory
- Chris Fowle reviewed the aquatic assessment undertaken in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) no plan to change abutments or to do any work within the water
- Arborist completed tree assessment to assess potential tree removals and degree of impact

Committee Discussion:

- GRCA/DFO/MNRF fish community records will include in the update
- Water balance has not been addressed yet but will be in the final draft
- Consideration to maintaining the abutments as a heritage feature; need to have discussion for maintenance over time
- Traffic lights offer a traffic calming feature
- Criteria for evaluating alternatives still in draft and can be revised or added to

Motion to extend the meeting to 7:00.

Moved by April Wepler and seconded by Jeremy Shute.

Motion Carried
-Unanimous-

C. Delegations:

1. Hugh Whitely

- Reviewed RSAC mandate
- Discussion of EA process and attention to social and cultural aspects
- Established land use plan is under appeal
- Purpose of Niska Road as a collector road, its function to provide through traffic
- Long term vision to close Niska Road
- Provided recommendations in handout

2. Bhaju Tamot

- Traffic concerns
- Safety issues- volumes and speeds of vehicles
- Road design from Puslinch to urban road design

3. Shugang Li

- Protection of natural area and green space
- Concerns over traffic, noise and pollution

4. Sandy Nicholls

- Discussion about the area, cultural heritage and natural heritage, wildlife
- In favour of closing the bridge and maintaining it as a pedestrian bridge
- Concerns over expanding bridge and creating a major transportation corridor through the NHS
- Concerns that people are using road as a commuter road

5. Hanna Boos

- Unique area that should be protected as a cultural landscape
- Traffic concerns
- Recreational aspects of the area
- Expansion of greenbelt

6. Janet Dalglish

- Why aren't we working with Puslinch community?
- 2 lane bridge is going to increase volume and speed despite traffic volume
- Emphasis should be on pedestrians
- Canoe launch concerns related to crossing the road

7. A) Dr. Dorothy Griggs

- Unique view down Niska Rd
- History- original bridge
- Design won't look the same as what's existing there now

b) Laura Murr

- Criteria requirements/ evaluation of alternatives
- Pre-determined 2 lane bridge option from original RFP
- Reference to Cambridge EA process- Black Bridge Road
- Significant wildlife habitat
- Preservation of a cultural heritage landscape
- Reference to Hamilton Valley Inn Road- closed bridge except to pedestrians
- Reference to 1987 Official Plan- have we lost our vision?
- Diverse ecological landscapes here that rare within the City of Guelph
- Go back and review alternatives

8. John Hart

- Who are the improvements for?

- Changes to the bridge will cause consequences unwanted by the residents
- Discussion regarding bridge and maintenance of bridge- repairs could be done
- Concentration of replacement instead of repair
- Concerns with trucks and truck speeds
- Pollution and noise impacts to the neighbours

9. Cynthia Della Croce

- Concern for children and families crossing Niska Road
- Speed and volume of traffic
- Concerns related to diminished tree canopy
- Bridge can be restored
- Defer decision until council makes a decision about the designation of the lands as a cultural heritage landscape

10. Marlene Hart

- Birding community
- Birds need access to open water
- Concerns about the number of trees and bushes that will be removed
- Birds will avoid the area if there is construction and no one can predict if they will return after
- Defer supporting road/bridge designs until council makes a decision regarding the designation of the lands as a cultural heritage landscape

11. Nicole Abouhalka

- Provided a history of Guelph
- Tree canopy goals
- Bridge can be fixed; create a new pedestrian bridge
- Cultural heritage landscape/heritage bridge

Motion to extend the meeting to 7:30.

Moved by Jeremy Shute and seconded by Ryan VanEngen.

Motion Carried

-Unanimous-

Committee Discussion:

- EA Rating system explained by Burnside; each item has a number of sub items
- Explanation of the weighting system, Burnside can share the technical reports with the Committee
- Timing for cultural heritage landscape designation. Study has been done, ongoing discussion between staff and committee to get an understanding of the heritage attributes. Mandate falls to Heritage Guelph Committee. From Staff's perspective the designation can happen at a later stage of the process, it doesn't need to stop the EA process.
- Discussion of the original RFP: did it pre-determine the two lane bridge? City Staff commented that the wording of the RFP was consistent with the Transportation Master Plan,

project scope can change after EA

Motion to extend the meeting to 7:45.

Moved by Jeremy Shute and seconded by April Wepler.

Motion Carried

-Unanimous-

D. In Committee Discussion

Moved by Ian McCormick and seconded by Ryan VanEngen,

“That as part of the preparation of the Environmental Study Report, the EA documents, including the draft Natural Environment Report and Evaluation of Alternative Tables be revised to incorporate the following:

- Characterization and an impact assessment on the hydrological and groundwater functions of the river valley, including seepages and existing ditch flows and potential thermal impacts;
- That the implications both negative and positive of water and sediment runoff for each of the road alternatives on the adjacent natural areas be evaluated;
- Updates to appropriately incorporate the City’s Natural Heritage System policies;
- Consideration of fragmentation impacts resulting from tree removal, as well as invasive species as it relates to Significant Woodlands and Wetlands;
- Clarification regarding the potential significance of the ELC Savannah Community including the presence of indicator species and any related available SRANK information;
- Consideration of impacts as it relates to the Monarch Butterfly and it’s habitat;
- That impacts to ecological functions also be considered in relation to changes/impacts regarding flood elevations;
- Consideration of timing windows for breeding birds to avoid impacts to bird species and fisheries be included;
- A stormwater management approach that provides for an enhanced level of water quality treatment that is appropriate for the Speed River as a cold/cool water managed stream;
- An analysis regarding the need for more than one wildlife passage for reptiles and small mammals be provided;
- An analysis regarding large mammal/ vehicle strikes and the potential benefits of traffic calming/speed reduction and increased or alternative methods for signage.”

Motion Carried

-Unanimous-

Motion to extend the meeting to 7:50.

Moved by April Wepler and seconded by Eric Wilson.

Motion Carried

-Unanimous-

Moved by Nicola Lower and seconded by Jeremy Shute

“That the River System Advisory Committee support the following in relation to the preliminary alternative design options:

- A bridge design that respects the views from and of the bridge and provides for recreational access to the river (i.e. canoe launch). Including consideration for height restrictions.
- A cross section that provides for a balance that provides for pedestrian and cyclist access, and incorporates traffic calming measures to ensure safe access and address traffic volumes and provide for recreational use, while reducing the amount of encroachment into the natural heritage system to the greatest extent.
- A signalized intersection that avoids further encroachment natural heritage system.

And providing that the preferred options minimize the overall amount of encroachment into adjacent natural heritage features and provide opportunities for edge enhancement.

And that the protection of the viewscape be incorporated into a preferred road and bridge design.”

Motion Carried
-Unanimous-

Moved by Jeremy Shute and seconded by Ryan VanEngen

“That the River System Advisory Committee be provided an opportunity to participate in the detailed design phase of the Niska Rd project and,

That the following be incorporated into the project through the detailed design phase:

- A bat habitat assessment for the presence of maternity roosts;
- A detailed tree preservation and landscape and compensation plan including details regarding the management of invasive species to be completed as part of the project;
- An environmental management plan to include: wildlife construction protocol, dewatering plan, sediment and erosion control plan and a phasing/ staging plan, wildlife timing windows;
- At least one wildlife passage for reptiles and small mammals be provided within the roadway between Pioneer Trail and the Speed River. The wildlife passage design should be based on current road ecology science and design parameters;
- A review of alternative deer/wildlife movement signage options/designs and incorporation of wildlife signage into the detailed design.”

Motion Carried
-Unanimous-

3.	Adjournment Motion to adjourn. Moved by April Weppeler and seconded by Jeremy Shute <p style="text-align: right;">Motion Carried Unanimous</p> Adjourned 7:50 pm
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