



BURNSIDE

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Minutes of Meeting

Community Workshop Summary Niska Road Bridge Environmental Assessment

Meeting Date: June 27, 2013

Date Prepared: July 17, 2013

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Location: YMCA, 130 Woodland Glen Dr. Guelph ON.

File No.: 300032275

Those in attendance were:

Brad Hamilton	City of Guelph
Rajan Phillips	City of Guelph
Don Kudo	City of Guelph
Allister McIlveen	City of Guelph
Leonard Rach	R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited
Doug Keenie	R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited
Philip Rowe	R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited
Ashley Gallaughier	R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited
Councillor Karl Wettstein	City of Guelph, Ward 6
Councillor Andy Van Hellemond	City of Guelph, Ward 2
Constable Mosey	Guelph Police
Sargent Peter Mitro	Guelph Police
86 Community Members	

The following items were discussed:

1. **Introductions and Workshop Agenda**
 - 1.1 Don Kudo of the City of Guelph welcomed everyone to workshop and introduced City of Guelph staff, Councillors and Guelph Police staff in attendance.
 - 1.2 Leonard Rach introduced Burnside staff in attendance and reviewed the proposed agenda for workshop. In general, the plan for the workshop was for the Project Team

The following items were discussed:

to conduct a formal presentation (45 minutes), followed by group break-out sessions (1 hour) and a wrap-up discussion (15 minutes).

- 1.3 Residents expressed concerns about workshop agenda organization and noted that not enough time was allotted for questions and answers.
- 1.4 One resident requested that the question and answer period be conducted before the presentation.
- 1.5 Discussion followed between residents and Project Team with respect to significant concerns relating to traffic and community safety. Residents were concerned about the safety of driving out onto the streets from their driveways and within their neighbourhood, and/or navigating heavy traffic during peak-AM and peak-PM hours.
- 1.6 Ward Councillor Karl Wettstein suggested that despite the concerns that need to be addressed, the presentation by the Project Team could answer many of the questions/concerns raised with respect to traffic and community safety and suggested that the Project Team be allowed to continue their presentation; residents agreed and presentation resumed.

2. Presentation and Discussion of Project Background Including Project History, Traffic Data in Project Area, and Niska/Stone Road Extensions, Led by Rajan Phillips (City of Guelph)

- 2.1 R. Philips presented the background for Niska Road, the bailey bridge and Stone Road Extension, as well as traffic data for the 2008, 2013 and 2031 planning periods.

The following bullets summarize, in general and by topic, the concerns raised by residents and answers given by the Project Team:

2.2 Traffic Volume Projections

- Residents voiced concern that a two-lane bridge would entice more traffic from Hwy 24; concerned with increased traffic as people take Niska Road as a short cut to or from the Hanlon Parkway.
- In general, residents felt that projected traffic volumes are significantly low especially considering projected development near Kortright Hills community (e.g. residential (dense-row housing, see below) and commercial (future Costco on Whitelaw Road)).
- Another resident added that the City of Guelph Official Plan includes a plan for dense-row housing on a plot of conservation authority–owned land that is currently an open field west of Ptarmigan Drive. Noted concerns with increased truck and car traffic if this development commences.
- R. Philips stated that this land is currently designated as prime agricultural, so development is not projected on this land. He also noted that there will be no development between Speed River and Highway 24 because this is prime agricultural land.
- Resident asked what assumptions are included in traffic projections.

The following items were discussed:

- R. Philips explained that the traffic projections were developed based on land use and activities in areas surrounding project land areas.

2.3 Traffic Data Collection/Planning

- Resident expressed concern that an 18-year planning horizon (2031) was not appropriate and asked Project Team to consider a shorter (e.g. 2-5 year) planning horizon instead to increase accuracy of representation.
- Residents questioned whether 2008 and 2013 numbers were taken at the same time of year.
- Residents asked where the traffic data results came from and who collected them.
- Resident raised concern with potential bias behind traffic data, noting concern that the type of bridge had already been chosen for the Niska Road crossing.
- D. Keenie advised the residents that the Project Team is reviewing all available traffic information and if required, the Team would conduct additional traffic studies and provide further traffic information / numbers to the community moving forward.

2.4 Traffic Distribution

- R. Philips stated that most of the traffic entering the community is from Kortright Road (east of Hanlon Parkway) and therefore is local.
- Residents rebutted saying that a lot of the traffic entering the community is from the Hanlon Parkway and from out of the City. There was a resounding concern from the residents in attendance that a lot of the traffic entering the community is not local.
- Resident asked how it is determined where traffic is coming from.
- R. Philips explained the idea of point of origin and destination; explained that the City is broken up into approx. 350 traffic zones, he further explained origin and destination studies (origin and destination of traffic dependent on people's area of residence, work and leisure, and can determine where people travelling to and from).

2.5 Stone Road Extension

- Resident suggested that if Stone Road and College extended west, traffic on Niska Road would be alleviated.

2.6 Other Concerns

- Resident voiced concern that not enough time allotted for public comment, and that public will not have enough time to comment before decisions are made.
- Several residents raised concerns with safety of bikers and pedestrians if Niska bridge becomes 2-lane.
- Concern raised that current Niska bridge is a 'turtle back' bridge, and that widening would have to occur to reduce erosion.

The following items were discussed:

3. Presentation and Discussion Regarding Traffic Bylaw Enforcement, Led by Guelph Police Constable Mosey

- 3.1 In general, residents raised concerns with current traffic speed and use of Niska Road by trucks.
- 3.2 Residents expressed concern about who is currently enforcing traffic bylaws such as truck weight restrictions.

Constable Mosey explained that currently vehicles speeding in area are being charged. About half of the charges issued to drivers travelling at or over 100km/hr are local residents and the other half are non-residents. Constable Mosey explained further:

- Existing Niska Bridge has 5,000 kg. max. load for trucks, and there is a charge for disobeying this bylaw.
 - Guelph Police are readily involved with traffic bylaw enforcement in this area including charging trucks and speeding vehicles.
 - Most trucks charged with infractions are not local, as GPS units are navigating drivers through Niska Road, without indicating presence of truck weight restriction.
 - Traffic signs are being implemented and may need to be improved to reduce truck traffic from non-local truck drivers.
- 3.3 Resident asked why surveillance cameras aren't installed to ensure bylaws can be enforced. Also concerned that truck ban not being enforced as it should be.

Constable Mosey noted that police have spoken with Cox Construction and other local construction companies about weight / truck restrictions on Niska Bridge. Also offered explanation that Lafarge currently assisting the Guelph Police with weighing of trucks, though only a temporary solution; needs to be a more permanent solution in place (e.g. no truck zone along this section of Niska Road and bridge).

- 3.4 Resident concerned that the only way to know the weight of a truck is by weighing it, therefore difficult to enforce bylaw.

Constable Mosey replied that the Guelph Police are working with the Ministry of Transportation who has portable scales to pull over trucks, weigh them, and fine if necessary.

- 3.5 Resident who is a truck driver commented from experience that there is an obvious sign stating truck ban restrictions, but that signage needs to be improved because trucks are still using bridge. Suggestion was made to have signs posted further in advance to area or put weigh scales in at bridge.

The following items were discussed:

- 3.6 Resident concerned that there aren't enough trained police officers to issue tickets against trucks disobeying the 'no trucks' sign, nor enough police officers to ensure that speeders are caught.
- Constable Mosey explained that there are eight officers currently available to enforce traffic (two at a given time). Two officers are trained as truck inspectors. However, Constable Mosey noted that any police officer in the area can enforce speeding or truck weight bylaws.
- 3.7 Resident commented that residents should not count on traffic enforcement with so few police resources available.
- Constable Mosey noted that if correct planning, communication and education used to inform residents and truck drivers of restrictions and bylaws that enforcement is required less.
- 3.8 Several residents offered potential solutions such as a yield sign, foot path and stop and go light to allow for safe passage on the bridge.
- D. Keenie noted that the Project Team is still in the early stages of the EA, and therefore all solutions are still on the table. He also noted that there are many options to be considered, and that there will be many more opportunities for providing comments during the course of the EA study.
- 3.9 Resident noted that although bridge does need repair, his main concern is the safety of residents. In particular, he voiced concern with traffic safety and speed on the bridge and from Foxwood Crescent to Downey Road between 7 and 8 a.m. (due to school busses stopping on Ptarmigan).
- Noted that current traffic speed in area needs more enforcement (speeding and ban bylaw enforcement, signage).
- 3.10 Resident asked if increasing the size of the bridge would increase the amount of weight the bridge can support thereby encouraging more truck traffic.
- Project Team assured residents that truck ban would still be enforced if a new bridge is constructed and that many options could be considered (i.e. two-lane bridge is not the only alternative).
- 3.11 Resident noted that the road network needs to be analysed in a more holistic way, including other roads in the area (i.e. Downey, Ptarmigan and Niska).
- 3.12 Resident suggested that all-way stop signs be put at all intersections in the area to slow traffic.
- 3.13 Constable Mosey stated that a meeting between City of Guelph and Guelph Police Services along with local residents would be held in the near future to develop solutions to current and projected traffic enforcement needs and strategies in the Niska Road area (for example improved signage). Constable Mosey noted further that local

The following items were discussed:

residents and police need to also have a discussion about current traffic issues in local area and that the County and City need to discuss this issue as well

- 3.14 Constable Mosey proposed improved (possibly larger) signage on Downey Road.
- 3.15 D. Keenie and L. Rach noted that there are various engineering options available for future consideration (as this is in the early stages of the EA) that can deter trucks, such as a physical height restriction barrier or roof on the bridge or possibly roadway geometric restrictions.
- 4. Presentation and Discussion of Environmental Assessment Process, Led by Philip Rowe (Burnside)**
- 4.1 Several questions were asked by residents during this section of the presentation. The following bullets summarize, in general, the concerns raised by residents and answers given by the Project Team:
- Resident asked how the Study Area of the bridge was determined. Concerned that whole affected area not included in Study Area.
 - Resident asked why the Downey / Niska intersection is not part of Schedule B EA.
 - Resident asked what stage of the EA we are currently in.
 - Resident asked whether meeting regarding alternatives has been held yet.
 - D. Keenie stressed accountability of EA process, selection of appropriate Schedule A, B, C, and said that Project Team has a professional and fiscal responsibility to select the most appropriate EA Schedule.
 - P. Rowe noted that there are many options to increase safety of the road regardless of EA Schedule; stressing that the content of an EA is the more important consideration when reviewing the success or level of quality of EA process. He also noted that this workshop is an activity more characteristic of a Schedule C EA, and noted further that:
 - Project Team's goal to look at whole environment.
 - Project is in the very early stages of the EA process and reiterated that this is not a 'done deal' at this stage in EA.
 - The EA summary report will be available to the public for the mandatory 30 day review period.
- 4.2 Resident inquired whether local organizations (such as Wellington Birders and Guelph Field Naturalists) would be used as resources for this project. P. Rowe noted that local organizations have been notified of the project and have been involved in circulation of correspondence regarding this EA. He encouraged residents to include names of local groups they felt were applicable to be consulted on their workshop comment sheet. He also reiterated that this is not a 'cookie-cutter' process, (i.e. what needs to be done will be done) that the EA process is a very transparent process, and that resources will be used to determine the best options for the project.
- 4.3 Resident requested a list of speakers from the workshop. P. Rowe noted that list would be included in copy of presentation online.

The following items were discussed:

- 4.4 Resident brought up concern that bridge will need to be widened. P. Rowe explained that the EA process is a 'to-and-fro' process in which concerns like that are accepted, addressed and included in the final decisions of the project.
- 4.5 Resident asked if there was a set timeline for the EA. P. Rowe explained that there is currently no set timeline, and reiterated the importance of doing the project in the right manner.
- 4.6 Resident asked if a Schedule B and Schedule C are 'the same', why not conduct a C. P. Rowe answered that whatever Schedule is chosen, the decision must be defensible and transparent. Noted that based on comments received from residents, the Project Team would reassess the EA Schedule thoroughly to ensure the process is objective.

D. Keenie noted the discrepancy amongst some residents, as some asked the Project Team to carefully consider the need for more process, while others suggested that the Project Team agree to a Schedule C on the night of the workshop. He re-iterated the importance of "doing things right" versus making "snap decisions" which is not in anyone's best interests.

Ward Councillor Wettstein interjected noting that City of Guelph residents should want the most thorough job done for the best cost, rather than encouraging an over assessment or under assessment; noted that fiscal context needs to be addressed.

- 4.7 Resident asked whether Burnside was conducting a Schedule A+ EA for Downey intersection, and if so could the Schedule A+ for the intersection and Schedule B EA for the road/bridge be combined into one Schedule C EA. P. Rowe answered that Burnside is involved in engineering for the project noted (Downey intersection), but that land parcels / study areas are separated with different EA requirements, and are therefore considered as different projects. P. Rowe also noted that the Schedules are determined in-part by the scope and requirements of each individual project.
- 4.8 Resident asked how study area is defined because they are concerned that study area not large enough or that affected areas (e.g. Whitelaw subdivision) were not included/notified. Resident expressed concern about inadequate research of affected neighbourhoods and lack of delivery of notices of workshop to residents in Whitelaw subdivision.

D. Keenie replied that a 'multi-pronged communication approach' (i.e. newspaper notices, mobile sign on Niska Road near bridge, hand delivery of notices, City website) is being used to try to reach as many residents as possible. P. Rowe added that most areas received hand-delivered invitations to the workshop.

- 4.9 Resident asked whether alternatives considered would change the study area.

P. Rowe replied that if the scope of the project changes, then it is possible that the study area could change. P. Rowe noted that the study area is determined by 'worst case alternative' footprint, and that this can be extended or changed if adverse effects are determined. This will be assessed moving forward.

The following items were discussed:

4.10 Resident asked what environmental agencies are involved in the EA, and whether there was a representative from the GRCA at the workshop. P. Rowe answered that GRCA is one of the main review agencies for this project, though other smaller groups can be involved. He noted that there was not a representative from GRCA present, but that they were notified, along with other agencies and all residents of Guelph, of the workshop.

D. Keenie added that all appropriate review agencies will be contacted and corresponded with in due process.

4.11 Resident asked why Stone Road Extension was stopped. Project Team responded that they would return to this question at the end of the presentations.

4.12 Resident suggested the bridge be closed and turned into a footpath and a new bridge be built elsewhere. Many residents in attendance agreed with suggestion.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Road and Bridge Challenges, Led by Leonard Rach (Burnside)

5.1 Several questions were asked by residents during this section of the presentation. The following summarize, in general, the concerns raised by residents and answers given by the Project Team

5.2 Resident offered idea to replace bridge with new single lane bridge with traffic signals on both sides.

5.3 Resident voiced concerned with fatalities of youth on bridge due to 'getting air' over bridge. Suggested that fixing bridge may exasperate this trend by increasing use and allowing higher speeds on the bridge.

5.4 Resident asked the City what the purpose of Niska Road Bridge is.

- Local traffic? Emergency traffic? Traffic from west? Traffic from Hanlon Parkway? If the bridge is expanded, will it still fulfill this purpose? Stated that statistics validating the purpose of this bridge need to be provided.

5.5 L. Rach responded that currently Niska Road is defined as a 'collector road', collecting and distributing traffic and transferring it to arterial roads.

5.6 Resident asked why there is no light at Woodland Glen Drive and Downey Road.

Although outside the Study Area, Project Team responded that there may not be enough room between intersections to have both signals in conjunction.

5.7 Resident voiced concern with current traffic speed on Ptarmigan Drive and potentially similar future traffic on Niska Road if the bridge is widened. Stated that traffic enforcement plans need to be developed for study area and surrounding areas to ensure safety.

5.8 Resident noted concern with traffic speed and flow on Downey Road being excessive.

The following items were discussed:

5.9 Resident noted that the local area including Niska Bridge and river valley area, is a "Piece of Paradise", noting examples of watching deer, etc. She noted that she does not want the natural area to be changed.

6. Group Discussion of Stone Road Extension

6.1 Councillor Van Hellemond asked for clarification on why the Stone Road extension was removed. R. Philips explained that Council decided to remove the Stone Road Extension from the City of Guelph Official Plan in 2009.

7. Workshop Adjourned

Summary prepared by:

R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited

Doug Keenie, P.Eng.
Jennifer Vandermeer, P.Eng.
Ashley Gallagher, B.A., E.S.

Distribution: City of Guelph: Brad Hamilton, Rajan Philips, Don Kudo
Burnside: Leonard Rach, Doug Keenie, Philip Rowe, Ashley Gallagher,
Jennifer Vandermeer