

Niagara Escarpment Crossing

Project Update

Public Works Committee – May 7, 2024

Project Overview

- Niagara Region is undertaking the **Niagara Escarpment Crossing Comprehensive Environmental Assessment (CEA)** (previously known as an Individual Environmental Assessment) to improve overall goods movement capacity and redirect truck traffic away from residential areas in west Niagara.
- The CEA will examine a range of alternatives to demonstrate the need for a new crossing of the escarpment.
- Today's presentation will provide:
 - A summary of the project history;
 - An overview of the work completed on a *Terms of Reference*; and
 - What comes next, including planned consultation.

Purpose of the Undertaking

The purpose of this undertaking is to consider a north-south transportation link, including a crossing of the Niagara Escarpment, between the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) and the future Regional Road 20 Bypass of Smithville to:

- Provide for safe and effective commercial vehicle movements and operations;
- Accommodate commercial vehicles and other transportation modes ;
- Provide greater safety for local communities;
- Provide for additional transportation system capacity with redundancy and resiliency; and
- Improve the economic vitality with the efficient movements of goods and people.

Project History

- Plans for a new north-south road in west Niagara have been explored before.
- The CEA represents a new planning initiative.
- Previous planning work and studies serve as important background information to contribute to the study file.

2016 NEC Transportation Study	2017 – 2018	2020 NEC Operations Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council recommended an extension of Bartlett Avenue, to be completed as a Municipal Class C EA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff identified risks that the Municipal Class C EA could not be completed.• Consulting assignment examined alternative EA process options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PW 9-2020 – Council informed CEA is recommended path forward.

Comprehensive Environmental Assessments

- A Comprehensive Environmental Assessment (CEA) is different than a Schedule A+ to C Class EA. It is most often utilized for large projects with significant environmental impacts.
- A CEA is followed where enhanced consultation is required and will be necessary in this case to secure approvals from the Niagara Escarpment Commission and Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP).
- The first stage of the CEA is to develop a ***Terms of Reference (TOR)***:
 - The TOR provides the framework for the project, identifying in advance the studies, workplans, and consultation to be undertaken during the EA.
 - Interested parties are consulted throughout the development of the TOR.
 - The TOR is approved by the MECP before the EA project begins.

Comprehensive Environmental Assessments

- Niagara Region has developed a draft TOR for the CEA.
- The draft TOR will be shared with interested parties for their review and feedback over the coming weeks.

Key Components

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking Purpose• Preliminary Study Area & Description• Alternatives To & Alternative Methods• Types of Potential Effects to be Assessed | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment & Evaluation Methodology• Commitments & Monitoring• Consultation Plan• Technical Work Plans |
|--|---|

TOR – Technical Work Plans

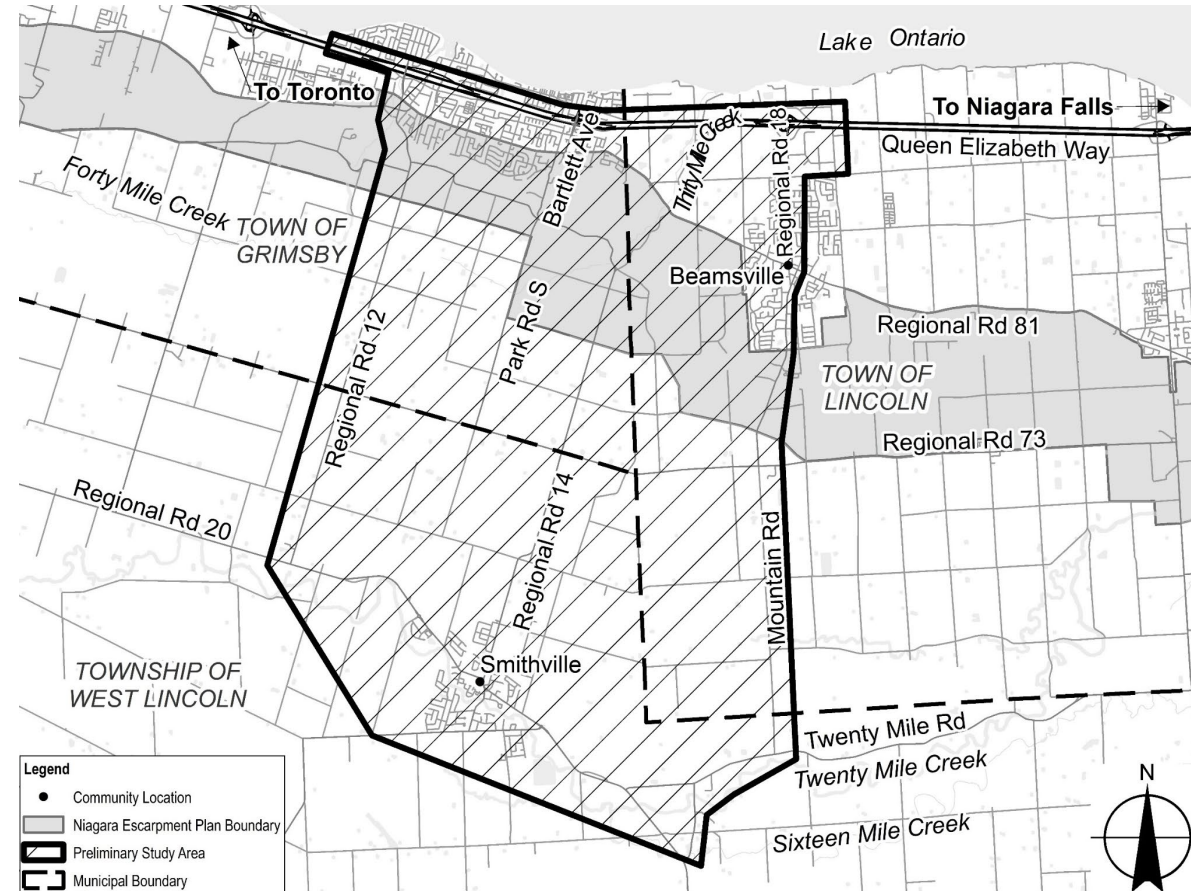
- The technical work plans define the "what" and "how" of the EA, describing what studies will be undertaken, what the area of study will be, and what factors will be considered.
- Workplans are included in TOR and approved by MECP before the EA begins.

Technical Work Plans

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|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Air Quality | 7. Natural Environment |
| 2. Agriculture | 8. Hydrogeology |
| 3. Archaeology | 9. Surface Water |
| 4. Culture Heritage | 10. Noise and Vibration |
| 5. Land Use | 11. Transportation |
| 6. Visual Assessment | 12. Financial |

TOR – Study Area and Alternatives

1. Do Nothing
2. Implement additional traffic management measures
3. Extend Bartlett Avenue and utilize the Park Road corridor
4. Construct a new corridor between Grimsby and Beamsville



Consultation and Next Steps

- Interested parties have been consulted throughout the early stages of the TOR development. These parties will now be provided an opportunity to review and comment on the draft TOR.
 - Grimsby, Lincoln, and West Lincoln staff;
 - Niagara Escarpment Commission;
 - Provincial Ministries (MECP, MTO); and
 - Indigenous Communities.
- Consultation activity will expand to include Grimsby, Lincoln, and West Lincoln Councils and a Public Information Centre open to all interested parties.

Consultation and Next Steps

Spring 2024	Summer 2024	Fall 2024 / Early 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations to Grimsby, Lincoln, and West Lincoln Councils. • Circulation of Draft TOR to all interested parties: LAM staff, Agencies, Ministries, Indigenous Communities. • Public Information Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation input reflected in revised TOR. • Submission of final TOR to Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated approval of TOR by Minister. • Request for Proposals issued for Environmental Assessment.

Questions