

Subject: Update Regarding Regional Road 87 Reconstruction in Port Dalhousie

Report to: Public Works Committee

Report date: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Recommendations

1. That Report PW 28-2024 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update Council on the actions taken by Niagara Region staff in response to the City of St. Catharines Council motion of March 4, 2024 regarding this project.
- On March 4, 2024, at its regular Council Meeting, the City of St. Catharines passed a motion to resolve that Niagara Region:
 - Develop a new reconstruction plan for review by City Council for the area including Lock St., Lakeport Rd., Main St., and Lakeside Park that: will not result in the loss of ANY current on-street or Lakeside Parking Lot parking spaces, retains current One-Way streets
 - Work with the utilities involved to consider burying the utility lines as part of the reconstruction within Port Dalhousie's heritage district, in order to help beautify Port Dalhousie and preserve and enhance what is left of the tree canopy; and
 - Consider installing heritage-appropriate, lighting in the reconstructed streets.
- The proposed reconstruction of Regional Road 87 (Main Street, Lock Street, and Lakeport Road) between Regional Road 42 (Ontario Street) and Verdun Avenue was the subject of a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the Region in 2021 that included significant public and agency consultation.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable as this report is just being provided for information purposes.

Analysis

Niagara Region completed a Schedule B Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for Regional Road 87 in Port Dalhousie

- In September of 2021 Niagara Region completed a Schedule B EA and prepared a [Project File Report](https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/pdf/project-file-report.pdf) (https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/pdf/project-file-report.pdf) for the reconstruction of Regional Road 87 (Main Street, Lock Street, Lakeport Road) between Regional Road 42 (Ontario Street) and Verdun Avenue in the City of St. Catharines.
- The project met the requirements of a Schedule A+ EA, however, given the redevelopment, the number of local businesses, and public interest in Port Dalhousie, staff undertook a more rigorous Schedule B EA and greater public consultation than required as part of a Schedule B EA
- The preferred design alternatives are identified in [Appendix L – Conceptual Plan](https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/pdf/appendix-l.pdf) (https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/pdf/appendix-l.pdf) of the Project File Report.

Significant public and agency consultation was undertaken as part of the Schedule B EA

- Under a normal Schedule B EA the process requires one mandatory point of contact with the public and agencies. A total of three Public Information Centres and Workshops were held to allow interested parties to provide input.

The Project File Report appendices identify the engagement and consultation undertaken by Niagara Region can be found on the [project webpage](https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/) (https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-87/)

- Notifications at key steps in the EA process (i.e. Notice of Commencement, Notice of Completion, and Notices of Public Information Centres) were shared with City Ward Councillors and Mayor as well as City staff. In addition, City staff were involved in all project meetings throughout the course of the EA.
- In January of 2020, a meeting was held between local business leaders, senior City and Niagara Region staff, and the project team to review the concerns of the local business community.
- In March of 2021, prior to the scheduling of the second Public Information Centre, Niagara Region staff presented the developed study alternatives and the

recommended preferred solution to elected representatives from the City and Niagara Region.

- In addition, the project team met with senior staff from Niagara Region and the City of St. Catharines on several occasions, prior to finalizing the EA, to ensure that the needs of the City were addressed.

The City of St. Catharines Council passed a motion requesting Niagara Region develop a new reconstruction plan for Regional Road 87 in Port Dalhousie

- On March 4, 2024, at its regular Council Meeting, the City of St. Catharines passed a motion to resolve that Niagara Region:
 - a) develop a new reconstruction plan for review by City Council for the area including Lock St., Lakeport Rd., Main St., and Lakeside Park that: will not result in the loss of ANY current on-street or Lakeside Parking Lot parking spaces, retains current One-Way streets as such and addresses all the issues identified herein.
 - b) work with the utilities involved to consider burying the utility lines as part of the reconstruction within Port Dalhousie's heritage district, in order to help beautify Port Dalhousie and preserve and enhance what is left of the tree canopy; and
 - c) consider installing heritage-appropriate, lighting in the reconstructed streets.
- Niagara Region Council was notified of the City's motion via a memorandum CWCD 2024-66.

Niagara Region staff met with City of St. Catharines staff to review the results of the EA and preferred alternatives identified in the EA.

- On April 4, 2024, Region staff met with City staff to discuss the process and outcomes of the EA. After a thorough discussion it was acknowledged that the EA process was followed correctly which resulted in the preferred alternative. City and Region staff also agreed that several parameters of the project would require further discussion and collaboration during detailed design, including but not limited to active transportation, parking and future operations of Lock Street.

City of St. Catharines Council has requested that buried utilities be considered for this project.

- Niagara Region staff have considered direct burying utilities throughout the project area and have concluded that there would be a significant impact to the existing mature trees as a result of root damage, and burying utilities would be significantly more expensive than relocating the above existing aboveground infrastructure. Therefore, staff does not recommend burying utilities.
- Should the City of St. Catharines wish to proceed with burying utilities within the project area, the additional cost of burying utilities would be borne by the City.

City of St. Catharines Council has requested that heritage appropriate lighting be considered for this project.

- It is recommended that, during detailed design, Niagara Region and City of St. Catharines staff work to establish appropriate lighting requirements for the project area.
- Any additional costs to implement heritage appropriate lighting would be borne by the City of St. Catharines.

The preferred alternative prioritizes public safety for all modes of travel within the project area.

- Narrower lanes will be implemented to help promote reduced vehicular travel speeds.
- Curb bump-outs at block ends will be included to address poor sightlines, further narrow the perceived roadway width to slow vehicular speeds and provide refuge to pedestrians.
- Cyclists will be directed to local streets or to dedicated cycle areas such as off-road cycle facilities.
- Improved pedestrian mobility will be addressed throughout the area with the inclusion of four (4) pedestrian crossing facilities at Main Steet/Ann Street, Main Street/Lock Street, at Lakeside Park, and at Lock Street/Lakeport Road.
- All vehicular, cycle, and pedestrian facilities will be designed to meet current industry standards and guidelines to ensure the safety of all users.

The preferred alternative will mitigate the impact to existing mature trees and provide additional landscaped areas.

- Tree protection zones will also be established during construction to protect mature trees.
- Existing wide boulevards along Main Street will be maintained.
- Boulevard trees will be planted within the Region's right-of-way.
- Improved streetscaping and landscaping along Lock Street including planters, and street trees.

The preferred alternative results in a net gain of parking.

- The preferred alternative will result in an additional 22 parking spots, over the existing spots available, throughout the project area.

Alternatives Reviewed

Staff reviewed the impact of undertaking a new or amended Environmental Assessment to evaluate the design changes suggested through the recent delegation to City of St. Catharines but recommend against doing so.

The current EA Study was approved by the Minister in 2021 following extensive consultation and consideration of alternatives, far exceeding the regulatory requirement. The existing EA holds status as the approved plan for implementation. To implement a different solution, staff would be required to undertake a significant amendment to the existing study or to conduct a new EA to properly assess the impact of new design alternatives. The approved EA study cost \$296,402 and was delivered over 3 years. Undertaking a new study would require similar funds and time to complete. Furthermore, it is possible that after consideration of the broader impacts, the new EA study would recommend the same or similar approach to the currently approved EA.

Given the high level of public interest in the outcome of this EA, and the many diverging resident and business perspectives, staff respectfully submit that the process of consultation and evaluation of design alternatives conducted to date provides the best overall outcome for the community, and recommend against redoing the EA study or undertaking a major amendment to the existing EA.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The recommendations contained in this report serve to support the following strategic priorities of Council:

- Effective Region
- Prosperous Region

Effective Region, the Regional road network serves to provide critical links for the movement of goods throughout the Region. Implementing the preferred alternative ensures continuous improvement and modernized of the Regional road network to meet the requirements of the multiple users of this roadway and the residents and visitors of Port Dalhousie and St. Catharines as a whole.

Prosperous Region, the current recommendation provides an inclusive and welcoming community for all users and enhances multiple modes of transportation through Port Dalhousie while meeting the principles of complete streets and walkable communities.

Other Pertinent Reports

CWCD 2024-66, April 26, 2024 - Correspondence from the City of St. Catharines respecting Reconstruction of Regional Road 87, Port Dalhousie (Main Street Lock Street and Lakeport Road)

(copy available upon request)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Key Plan

Appendix 2 St. Catharines notice of motion re Reconstruction of RR 87 in Port
Dalhousie