
Subject: Jurisdictional Transfer of Hwy 20 between Hwy 58 and Townline Road, in the City of Thorold

Report to: Public Works Committee

Report date: Tuesday, January 7, 2025

Recommendations

1. That Council **DIRECT** staff to enter into negotiations with the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding the potential transfer of jurisdiction of Highway 20 between Highway 58 and Townline Road, in the City of Thorold from MTO to Niagara Region.

Key Facts

- This report seeks Council's direction to enter negotiations with the MTO related to the potential transfer of jurisdiction of a section of Highway 20 from the MTO to the Region.
- The MTO currently owns the section of Highway 20 between Highway 58 and Townline Road in the City of Thorold.
- Niagara Region currently owns Regional Road 20 east and west of the road segment under Provincial ownership.
- Niagara Region currently maintains the provincial segment with funding from the Province to cover those costs, pursuant to an agreement in place with the Province.
- Regional Road 20 is a key strategic connection that has generated significant investment interest in housing and employment opportunities in the City of Thorold; the proposed transfer of jurisdiction is necessary to allow for timely development along this corridor. The City supports the transfer of the road to the Region.

Financial Considerations

Niagara Region currently manages maintenance activities on behalf of the province with cost recovery.

Hwy 20 between Hwy 58 and Townline Road is currently owned by the MTO. Niagara Region maintains the road section for the MTO pursuant to an agreement with the

Province. The length of this road section is approximately five (5) lane kilometers, and it is maintained to Regional maintenance standards.

At present, the compensation from the Ministry for undertaking this work is approximately \$13,800 per lane kilometer. In addition, this payment increases by the CPI annually.

The compensation includes all costs for the maintenance of the road including overhead and administrative costs.

Should the Region take ownership of the Provincial Road segment, operation and maintenance cost would become the responsibility of the Region.

Although unknown at this time, staff expect that upon transfer of the road segment current contribution from the Ministry will cease. This would place an additional \$69,000 in operating pressure on the Transportation Services annual Operating Budget.

Staff would look to submit an Operating business case at such time, through the annual Operating Budget deliberations, to offset that expense.

Analysis

Highway 20 presents a strategic opportunity for economic development

The City of Thorold is launching a new economic development program designed to drive future growth and prosperity, leveraging strategic partnerships with the Niagara Region. Highway 20, initially created in 1930 as a bypass to the congested Highway 8, is now at the center of proposed investments in housing and employment opportunities along its corridor within the City. This key stretch of highway is strategically located between Highway 406, which connects both North and South Niagara, and has already attracted significant investment interest. Recognized as a strategic development corridor, it aligns with Niagara Region's Strategic Plan for a more prosperous and effective region, as well as the goals of the Region's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy. The proposed transfer of ownership will unlock the full potential of these lands.

A portion of Hwy 20 was not transferred when the Region was established.

Hwy 20 west of Hwy 58 to the western boundary of the Region crosses through several municipalities (Thorold, Pelham, West Lincoln) and was transferred to the Region from the Ministry between 1998 and 2001. Hwy 20 from Townline Road to Portage Road in

the City of Niagara Falls was transferred from the Province to the City, and ultimately to the Region in 1999.

The segment in between the two segments listed above remains in Provincial ownership. The road section plays an integral role in the movement of local goods and services in an east-west direction across the Niagara Region and meets the criteria for an arterial road.

Hwy 20 Between Hwy 58 and Townline Road no longer suits its original design as a rural, controlled-access highway.

The City of Thorold is experiencing unprecedented growth in the Rolling Meadows community and is planning to exceed its growth targets for the next couple of years. In preparation to manage the impacts of new development further infrastructure must be implemented. This will include sanitary sewer and watermain to service the adjacent lands.

The implementation of such infrastructure along a controlled access Highway is restrictive. This is an important consideration as these restrictions make effective infrastructure installation extremely expensive and, in some cases, reduces the availability of connections within the controlled access corridor. This has the potential to stunt the City's ability to implement infrastructure in a timely manner, ultimately affecting housing targets.

The City of Thorold is supportive of the Region taking ownership of this road segment to stimulate development along the corridor.

The City of Thorold has verbally appealed to the Province to transfer ownership of this road segment to the Region at no cost in order to facilitate the necessary growth within the community. Attached in Appendix 1 is a letter of support from the City, indicating their desire to see Niagara Region take on this corridor to allow for cost effective collaboration.

Should staff be successful in negotiating a reasonable transfer with the Ministry final approval will be sought via a future report.

The purpose of this report is to seek Council permission to negotiate with the Province to transfer Regional Road 20 into Regional jurisdiction. Staff will target a transfer with neutral cost impact on the physical asset. There will be no immediate capital improvement cost associated with the transfer of this asset due to recent rehabilitation

undertaken by the Ministry. Staff will return with a second report for Council's review and approval in future should an agreement in principle be reached.

Should negotiations fail, no further approval is required, and Council will be notified via Council Weekly Correspondence Distribution.

Alternatives Reviewed

Enter negotiations with the Ministry (Recommended)

This will allow the Region to investigate jurisdictional transfer of Regional Road 20 with the Province, and to work with the City of Thorold to explore the growth potential of the lands surrounding the corridor.

Do nothing (Not Recommended)

This alternative would maintain the corridor as a controlled access corridor under Provincial jurisdiction. This option would limit the Region and City of Thorold's ability to control and implement a growth plan that is cost-effective.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Effective Region

Supporting this report and staff in the negotiation process with the Ministry will ultimately align with Council's strategic goal of effective Region. The future download of this road section will act as a catalyst for economic growth along the corridor.

Prosperous Region

Unlocking future growth opportunities will serve to further Council's strategic goal of Prosperous Region. Allowing for future growth opportunities along one of the Region's heavily traveled corridors will make the area more attractive to developers and assist the Region and City in implementing a vision for the corridor that is in line with Region and City values and priorities.

Other Pertinent Reports

Not applicable.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Letter from the City of Thorold