

<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 21, 2017</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>KELLY SCHERR, P. ENG, MBA, FEC MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL &amp; ENGINEERING SERVICES AND CITY ENGINEER</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>MTO HIGHWAY 401 IMPROVEMENTS AT POND MILLS ROAD AND VETERANS MEMORIAL PARKWAY</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Environmental & Engineering Services and City Engineer the following report describing improvements to Highway 401 in London **BE RECEIVED** for information.

<b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b>
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- Civic Works Committee – September 10, 2012 – Highway 401 Highbury Avenue Interchange Reconstruction Ministry of Transportation Class Environmental Assessment Addendum
- Civic Works Committee – February 4, 2013 – Highway 401 Interchange Projects Agreement with Ministry of Transportation
- Civic Works Committee – May 6, 2013 – Veteran Memorial Parkway South Extension and Highway 401 Interchange Improvements Transportation Environmental Study Report

<b>2015-19 STRATEGIC PLAN</b>
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The following report supports the Strategic Plan through the strategic focus area of Building a Sustainable City by improving access for Londoners and supporting industrial growth in the area of Highway 401. The projects will also implement and enhance safe and convenient mobility choices for automobile users, pedestrians and cyclists for the short and longer term.

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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**Purpose**

This report provides information on two Highway 401 projects being managed by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) in London. Firstly, the report provides a brief description of a provincial environmental assessment for structure improvements planned by MTO for Highway 401 in the area of Pond Mills Road, CN Rail, Elliott-Laidlaw Drain and Murray Drain.

The report also provides a general update on the status of the Veterans Memorial Parkway (VMP) South Extension and Interchange Improvements construction. The update includes a description of upcoming construction traffic management impacts.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Pond Mills Road and CN Structure Replacements**

MTO is nearing the completion of an environmental assessment (EA) for structure replacements on Highway 401 at CN and Pond Mills Road and Elliot-Laidlaw & Murray Drain culvert replacements. The project includes Highway 401 grade changes in the area of these structures west of Highbury Avenue. MTO has offered to provide a committee presentation on the EA.

Highway 401 will be designed to retain three through lanes in each direction along with the addition of speed change lanes on the revised road profile. The impacts to the existing Pond Mills Road bridge structure will require a replacement and lengthening. Through discussions with MTO, the City has requested additional structure width for future vehicular, cycling and pedestrian facilities on Pond Mills Road. MTO has indicated that the larger structure to accommodate municipal purposes will require a cost sharing contribution from the City. A formal agreement is anticipated to address this improvement request. A capital account is identified in the capital budget based on an estimated cost as identified in the 2014 Development Charges Background Study.

MTO will require the acquisition of private land strip widenings as defined in the provincial EA. Some land will also be required from the City at Pond Mills Road. This land requirement and a cost contribution agreement will be addressed in a future committee report after the provincial EA is completed. Completion of the EA is anticipated shortly. The Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) will be made available for the required 30-day public review period.

The improvements identified in this EA are in close proximity to the Highbury Avenue Interchange Improvements project that is identified in the 2013 MTO/London Interchange Agreement. MTO has indicated that the projects will be coordinated to minimize impacts to traffic in the area. The replacement of the Pond Mill structure is anticipated to take up to 18 months during which time Pond Mills Road will be closed. This closure will not occur at the same time that any restrictions are in place for Highbury Avenue traffic.

MTO anticipates retaining a Design Build (DB) contractor in early 2018 leading to a construction start in the Spring of 2019 subject to EA clearance and property acquisition schedules.

### **VMP South Extension and Interchange Improvements**

The south extension of VMP to Wilton Grove Road and associated interchange improvements at Highway 401 is one of four partnership projects addressed in a 2013 MTO/City of London Interchange agreement. The project EA was completed in 2013. MTO is managing the construction phase of the project.

MTO has retained a DB contractor for the improvements at the Highway 401/VMP Interchange along with the extension of VMP southerly to Wilton Grove. Design was completed through the winter, spring & summer of 2016 before initiating construction on the south side of the Highway 401 in the fall of 2016. At that time, the DB initiated the road extension along with utility relocations along Wilton Grove Road.

Construction in 2017 will commence early in April with a six month closure of the Highway 401 eastbound on- and off- ramps and the demolition of the existing structure. The demolition will occur in 16 hours over a weekend (ie. Saturday evening through Sunday) when a signed detour route for Highway 401 traffic onto Bradley Avenue will occur between Highbury Avenue and Westchester Bourne. Consultation with MTO, County of Middlesex and the City has occurred to agree on this route, and OPP will be on hand during the detouring of traffic to ensure traffic flows adequately and safety is maintained. Additional signs will be provided to define a route for traffic to London International Airport. Proper notice of this closure will occur with signage in the area and along Highway 401 and the City's Renew website.

As the VMP underpass structure is reconstructed, there will be additional closures of Highway 401 to erect the new bridge girders. These closures are anticipated to also occur over a weekend and will be limited to five hours in duration. It is anticipated that two closures will occur for eastbound traffic and two closures for westbound traffic. Actual dates and times for these closures will be defined later as construction progresses.

Closure of the interchange westbound ramps will occur for three months starting in June to complete roadwork on the north side of the Highway.

The interchange is expected to be re-opened late in the fall of 2017 for use by traffic over the winter season. In the spring of 2018, the interchange will again be closed for the DB contractor to complete the outstanding interchange improvements. The balance of the work will include the placement of surface asphalt on all ramps and VMP along with final pavement markings. Some landscaping of the disturbed areas will occur before the interchange is re-opened later in June. Further planting will occur later as part of a separate assignment by MTO.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Province of Ontario is making investments to the provincial freeway system in London. These improvements will help improve the function of the freeway and enhance London's competitiveness.

The anticipated completion of the provincial EA for structure upgrades west of Highbury Avenue will obtain approval for important improvements to the provincial freeway system.

Construction of the VMP South Extension and Interchange Improvements was initiated in the fall of 2016. London travellers will be impacted by the upcoming activities starting in April. The construction will require intermittent closures of Highway 401, VMP and interchange ramps in 2017 and 2018. The City will work with MTO to inform Londoners of these road impacts.

## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared with the assistance of Karl Grabowski, P.Eng.,  
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