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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING ON APRIL 23, 2012
FROM:	JOHN BRAAM, P.ENG. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLANNING, ENVIRONMENTAL & ENGINEERING SERVICES & CITY ENGINEER
SUBJECT	HIGHWAY 401 / WONDERLAND ROAD INTERCHANGE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION PROVINCIAL CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Acting Executive Director, Planning, Environmental & Engineering Services & City Engineer, the Provincial Transportation Environmental Study Report for a New Interchange at Highway 401 and Wonderland Road South **BE ENDORSED**, it being noted that this endorsement is for the technical aspects of the plan.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- Environment and Transportation Committee – December 9, 2002 – Wonderland Road South / Highway 401 Interchange: Planning Study Completion
- Environment and Transportation Committee – October 18, 2010 – Wonderland Road South / Highway 401 Interchange: Environmental Study Report Addendum
- Built and Natural Environment Committee – November 2, 2011 – Wonderland Road Interchange: Appointment of a Consulting Engineer

BACKGROUND

Context:

The need for a future interchange at Wonderland Road and Highway 401 has been identified as part of the City of London's Official Plan and is documented in the City's Long-term Transportation Corridor Protection Study (September, 2001). This improvement aims to enhance the ability of the local transportation network to move people and goods safely, quickly and efficiently, promote economic development and integrate local transportation needs with the broader provincial transportation network. This project is supported by the draft Industrial Land Development Strategy Update recommendations. These recommendations have a focus on the Highway 401 corridor including the consideration of an office business park economic gateway along the Wonderland Road corridor and an "eco-industrial" park in the Manning Drive corridor linking the W12A landfill to the future interchange at Highway 401.

A new interchange at Wonderland Road along with an expanded interchange and south extension of Veterans Memorial Parkway are included in the London Economic Development Plan options. Provincial government support for these projects was provided in a letter from Kathleen Wynne, then Minister of Transportation, in August, 2011. A multi-phase project has been added to the provincial government 2011 to 2015 Southern Ontario Highways Program making them provincial projects with an objective to complete in the next five years. How the City participates financially in these projects will be the subject of a future report.

Provincial Environmental Assessment Summary:

A municipal environmental assessment for the Wonderland Road Interchange was completed by the City in 2002. An EA Addendum was completed in 2010 to keep the municipal environmental approval current.

A provincial EA is required to enable the province to take the lead on and construct the project. The EA is building upon the previous municipal study findings and recommendations and is coordinated with an enhanced design phase to prepare the project for a design-build procurement.

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URS Canada was retained to complete the current study which is following the approved planning process for Group “B” projects under the MTO *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities (2000)*. Alternatives for constructing the new interchange at Highway 401 have been examined. Subject to consultation with stakeholders and property owners, the analysis to date has confirmed the interchange layout previously identified and shown in Figure 1. However, the current study is recommending a Highway 401 overpass, with Highway 401 going over Wonderland Road South. This is different than the previous studies which recommended an underpass. A comparison of the Wonderland Road profile associated with the overpass and underpass alternatives is shown in Figure 2. Both alternatives result in similar impacts to the natural, socio-economic and cultural environments and have similar costs. However the overpass recommendation provides benefits including:

- flatter grades on Wonderland Road, with improved sight lines;
- an interchange without large embankments that will fit with the surrounding topography and is less intrusive to surrounding land uses;
- flexibility for future expansion of the interchange; and,
- slightly less property acquisition.

The overpass recommendation avoids the construction of large approach embankments at heights of up to 9 m above existing grade. Instead, the new Wonderland Road profile would be closer to existing grades, with a maximum cut of 6 m below the existing ground surface. The Highway 401 profile would not change.

Property acquisition is required from seven landowners. The Ministry of Transportation would purchase and own the interchange property.

Similar to the previous municipal class EA, the provincial class EA process satisfies the Environmental Assessment Act and includes consultation. Government agencies, aboriginal communities, emergency services providers, interest groups and utility companies were notified of the study. Individual meetings with impacted property owners are planned to describe and get feedback on the changes from the previous study and explain the property acquisition process. Upon conclusion of this consultation the Transportation Environmental Study Report will be filed for public review.

Conclusions:

A new interchange at Highway 401 and Wonderland Road South is identified in the Official Plan and would support economic development of the City as identified in the Economic Development Plan Options and the draft Industrial Land Development Strategy Update recommendations.

URS Canada, on behalf of The Ministry of Transportation and City of London, is completing a provincial class EA for the Highway 401 / Wonderland Road South Interchange. This is being conducted in order for MTO to become the project proponent and construct the project. The project is now identified in the provincial government 2011 to 2015 Southern Ontario Highways Program.

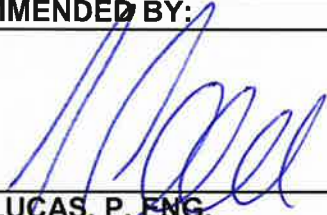
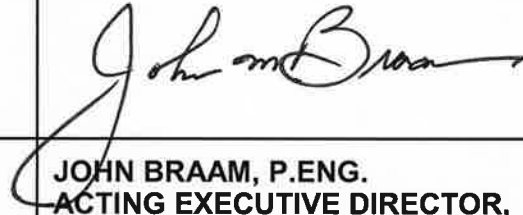
The City of London previously completed a municipal class EA for the project. The provincial study supports the previous findings. However, a recommendation is being made to revise the design from an underpass to an overpass (Hwy 401 over Wonderland Road). This provides additional benefits to the City with an improved Wonderland Road profile and a better fit with the surrounding landscape.

Staff recommends that Council endorse the provincial EA technical findings.

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Acknowledgements:

This report was prepared with the assistance of Doug MacRae, P.Eng. Transportation Design Engineer in the Transportation Planning & Design Division.

RECOMMENDED BY:	REVIEWED AND CONCURRED BY:
	
JOHN LUCAS, P. ENG. DIVISION MANAGER TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND DESIGN	JOHN BRAAM, P.ENG. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLANNING, ENVIRONMENTAL & ENGINEERING SERVICES & CITY ENGINEER

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Attachments: Figure 1 – Proposed Interchange Layout
Figure 2 - Wonderland Road Profiles for Overpass and Underpass Alternatives

cc: Grant Hopcroft
Kevin Bentley, Ministry of Transportation
Tim Sorochinsky, URS Canada Inc.

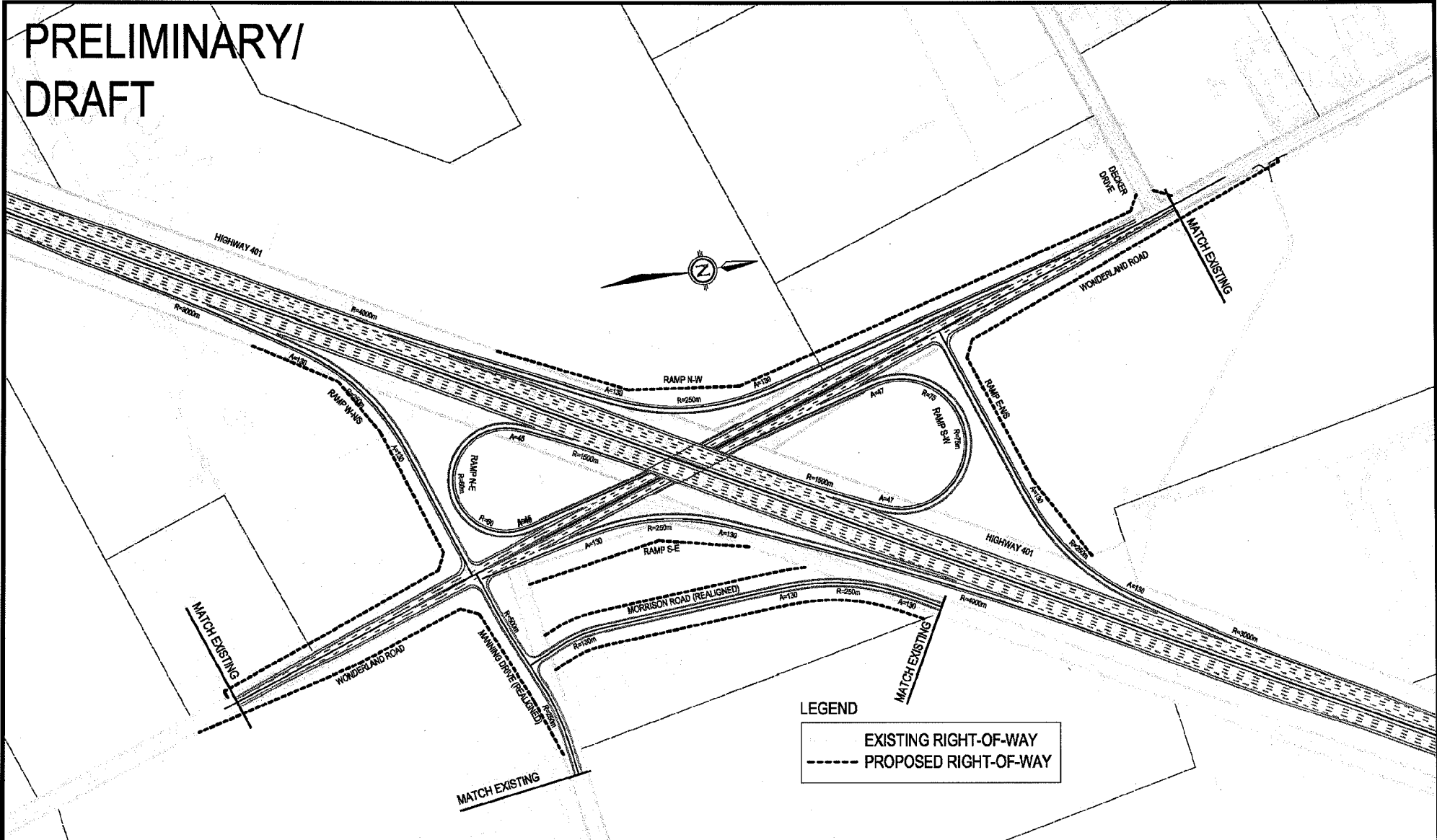


FIGURE 1 – PROPOSED INTERCHANGE LAYOUT

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			<p>HIGHWAY 401 / WONDERLAND ROAD SOUTH INTERCHANGE G.W.P. 3031-11-00</p>	<p>RECOMMENDED PLAN -HIGHWAY 401 OVERPASS-</p>	<p>SCALE: </p> <p>DATE: JANUARY 2012</p>	<p>DWG 2A</p>
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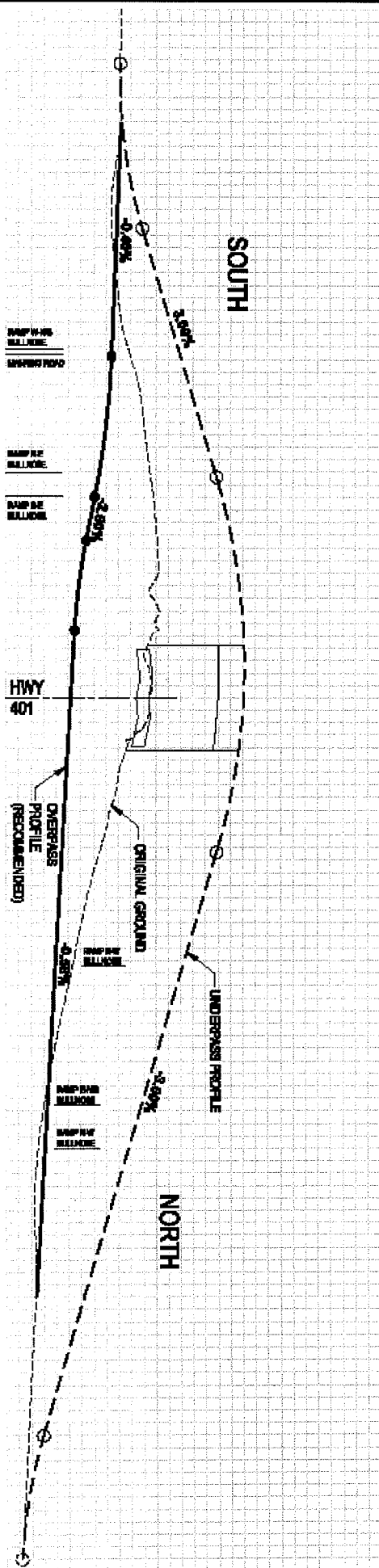
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FIGURE 2 – WONDERLAND ROAD PROFILE FOR OVERPASS AND UNDERPASS ALTERNATIVES

FILENAME: C:\1-22018822-Hwy401Wonderland\08_CAD\DWG 20\Superceded\Wonderland IC Underpass Vs Overpass Profile Comparison_120128.dwg
 PLOTDATE: Mar 24, 2012 - 7:58am

**PRELIMINARY/
DRAFT**

WONDERLAND ROAD



 Ontario Ministry of Transportation	 London	 URS	HIGHWAY 401 / WONDERLAND ROAD SOUTH INTERCHANGE G.W.P. 3031-11-00	- HIGHWAY 401 UNDERPASS VS OVERPASS PROFILE COMPARISON -	SCALE N.T.S. DATE JANUARY 2012	DWG 1
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