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<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING ON AUGUST 21, 2012</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>JOHN BRAAM, P.ENG. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLANNING, ENVIRONMENTAL &amp; ENGINEERING SERVICES &amp; CITY ENGINEER</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>HIGHWAY 401 / WESTMINSTER DRIVE STRUCTURE REPLACEMENT MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That, on the recommendation of the Acting Executive Director, Planning, Environmental & Engineering Services & City Engineer, the Preferred Plan for the Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment Study conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation for improvements at the Highway 401 Westminster Drive Bridge **BE ENDORSED**, it being noted that this endorsement is for the technical aspects of the plan including:

- i) the replacement of the bridge on existing alignment;
- ii) a grade raise of approximately one metre on Westminster Drive and the south intersection with White Oak Road; and,
- iii) a bridge closure for a period up to three months during construction.

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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**Context:**

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has identified structural and functional deficiencies at the structure crossing of Westminster Drive and Highway 401. MTO retained Stantec Consulting Ltd. to undertake a Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment Study for improvements at this location.

The City of London was consulted as a stakeholder during the study. The purpose of this report is to summarize the study and obtain Council endorsement of the Class EA Preferred Plan.

**Class Environmental Assessment Summary:**

The Westminster Drive bridge was built in 1959 when the construction of Highway 401 bisected the intersection of Westminster Drive and White Oak Road.



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MTO has determined that the condition of the Highway 401 / Westminster Drive Underpass Structure makes it a priority for rehabilitation or replacement in the next 5 to 10 years. Additionally, the bridge is functionally obsolete since it is not long enough to span a future widening of Highway 401. A Highway 401 widening EA was completed in 2004 but no timing has been confirmed for the widening.

MTO retained Stantec Consulting Ltd. to undertake a Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment Study for improvements at this location. This study was combined with two other locations and information on the study can be found at the project website [www.highway401-3bridges.ca](http://www.highway401-3bridges.ca). The purpose of the study was to identify preferred improvement plans for the existing Highway 401 underpass. The study included the development and evaluation of a range of reasonable alternatives to accommodate the ultimate (30 year) transportation needs. This included the development of bridge replacement alternatives, local road realignment alternatives and construction staging and traffic management plans.

The study was initiated in March 2011. Public Information Centres were held in December, 2011 and April, 2012.

**City Road Network Considerations:**

The City of London was consulted as a project stakeholder and staff provided input into the alternative generation and evaluation process. This process included the development of several alternatives that would reconfigure the city road network including alternatives that would eliminate a stop condition on either Westminster Drive or White Oak Road. MTO indicated that a City financial contribution would be sought if a higher-cost alternative was promoted by the City in order to enhance the city road network. Drawings of the alternatives are available on the project website.

Given that this area is outside the Urban Growth Area and no planning studies have been completed in the area, staff could only speculate how road alignments may coordinate with future development. From a transportation perspective, it is desirable to maintain this freeway crossing. However, it is acknowledged that this is not a priority Hwy 401 crossing and there is no identified need to improve the continuity of Westminster Drive or White Oak Road. Further, in consultation with the Land Use Planning and Policy Division, it does not appear that making alignment revisions to the City road network will improve the future development potential of the area.

**Preferred Plan:**

The study has identified a preferred plan that includes:

- Replacement of the bridge on the existing Westminster Road alignment over Highway 401;
- A grade raise of approximately one metre on Westminster Drive over Highway 401 to accommodate the depth of the new longer bridge;
- A grade raise of approximately one metre at the intersection of White Oak Road and Westminster Drive (south of Highway 401);
- Closure of Westminster Drive over Highway 401 for a period of up to three months during construction.

The preferred plan was selected based on an evaluation of Highway Engineering, Social, Cultural and Natural Environment considerations.

MTO has acknowledged that the project construction staging and any proposed road closure will have regard for agricultural activities, emergency services, student bussing and local aggregate extraction activities. Accelerated construction techniques will be used to minimize the road closure duration. The study includes a commitment to continue to consult with local farmers and the City of London during the detail design of the project.

Water Engineering has identified to MTO's project team that a City watermain crosses Highway 401 within the site and some modifications or accommodations may be necessary, as determined during the design phase.

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**Conclusion:**



Stantec Consulting Ltd., on behalf of MTO, is finalizing a Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment Study for improvements at the Westminster Drive bridge over Highway 401. The preferred plan is for a bridge replacement on the existing alignment with a grade raise of one metre. It is proposed to close the bridge for construction for a period up to three months.

The project as proposed will be entirely funded by MTO. No financial contribution is required from the City.

Staff recommends that Council endorse the Ministry's EA preferred plan. The next step for the study is to file the Transportation Environmental Study Report on the public record. A construction schedule for the project has not been confirmed but the bridge replacement could happen as soon as 2014.

**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:
	
<b>JOHN LUCAS, P. ENG. DIVISION MANAGER TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND DESIGN</b>	<b>JOHN BRAAM, P.ENG. ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLANNING, ENVIRONMENTAL &amp; ENGINEERING SERVICES &amp; CITY ENGINEER</b>

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cc: Frank Hochstenbach, Ministry of Transportation  
Gregg Cooke, Stantec Consulting Ltd.  
Gregg Barrett  
Pat Lupton