

Advisory Committee on the Environment Energy & Built Environment sub-committee “Discover Wonderland”

“Discover Wonderland” is an environmental assessment currently underway by the City of London to explore options to improve traffic flow along Wonderland Road. This is the introductory paragraph from the notice of study commencement (full document attached):

The City of London is starting the process to plan for long-term improvements to the Wonderland Road corridor, from Sarnia Road to Southdale Road West. Wonderland Road is a critical north-south corridor in the City, with a variety of neighbourhoods, businesses and other uses along the road. This study will consider if Wonderland Road should be widen to six lanes, as well as how pedestrian, cyclist, transit and other users should be accommodated.

Members of the Advisory Committee on the Environment are encouraged to put forward a recommendation to City Council explaining why expanding to six lanes is not a sustainable option for the future of Wonderland Road or the city as a whole for the reasons that follow:

1. **Widening roads does not decrease traffic.** Simply widening to six lanes as proposed only allows for more vehicles to use the road, and thus encourages more single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to use the corridor. London needs to go on a “traffic diet” (i.e. decrease or mitigate the increase of SOVs) as part of the solution. To use the same analogy: when one finds themselves putting on weight, they usually change their diet instead of going out and buying larger pants to permit a wider wasteline. Adding two lanes to the road is only allowing the status quo to continue and permit more SOVs on the road, leading to further congestion of both Wonderland Road and other arteries that connect to it. More personal vehicles will use Wonderland Road if it were to be expanded and will not reduce the congestion as desired. More vehicles in the traffic system will only produce more air pollution and further the effects of climate change. There are also a number of issues surrounding the natural environment with widening, such as increasing difficulty for wildlife to cross the road (particularly an issue just south of Guy Lombardo Bridge where deer cross from Woodland Cemetery to Springbank Park and Greenway Park), impacts on waterways such as the Thames River, and massive loss of trees along the route.

2. **Much of the congestion happens during rush hour.** Increasing traffic flows during rush hour, through efforts such as better synchronization of lights, building roundabouts where appropriate, enhancing public transit (e.g. having a bus route that runs from Sunningdale Road to Exeter Road with appropriate connecting route to run east/west), and better infrastructure for active transportation (pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle paths).
3. **Access management is key.** Wonderland Road, much like many other major corridors in London, have poor access management and need to be viewed more like provincial highways to get traffic moving: there are way too many private drives and small streets that have traffic turning right or left to and from Wonderland, and often within through lanes. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has an excellent document about how to properly control access, and the high-level view is included on the below. (The entire document has been attached for review by ACE members.) Improving access to commercial areas and side-streets must be done first, such as by right-in/right-out access or having access off side-streets.

2.4 Principles of access management

Access management seeks to limit and consolidate access connections (entrances) along provincial highways while promoting a supporting municipal roadway network that will sustain land use development. The result is a provincial highway network that functions safely and efficiently for its useful life. The goals of access management are accomplished by applying the following principles:

1. Limit direct access connections to provincial highways. Highways serving higher volumes of provincial traffic require strict control over access connections, while minor collector and local highways can accommodate more frequent and direct access connections.
2. Locate signals in a way that favours through movements of traffic. Long, uniform spacing of intersections and signals on provincial highways makes it easier to coordinate traffic signals to ensure movement at the desired speed. Spacing of intersections is important even for unsignalized roads. If an access connection that is not properly located later becomes signalized, it can cause substantial increases in travel time and reduced operating speeds.
3. Preserve the functional intersection areas and functional interchange areas. The functional area is the area within the intersection or interchange where motorists are decelerating and manoeuvring into the appropriate lane to stop or complete a turn. Access connections that are too close to intersections or interchange ramps can cause serious traffic problems. Access to facilities that are important to the more efficient and sustainable operation of the highway, such as transit stations, transit park-and-ride

facilities and carpool parking lots, may be permitted closer to the highway interchange or intersection than is specified in this guideline. These must be carefully planned and designed with consideration for their effects on safety, traffic operations and congestion.

4. Limit and separate the number of direct access connections. Drivers make more mistakes and are more likely to be involved in collisions when there are complex driving situations created by numerous access connections. Conversely, simplifying the driving task contributes to improved traffic operations and fewer collisions. A less complex driving environment is accomplished by limiting the number and type of access connections to the highway.

5. Remove turning vehicles from through-traffic lanes. Turning lanes allow drivers to decelerate gradually out of the through lane and wait in a protected area for an opportunity to complete a turn, thereby reducing the severity and duration of conflict between turning vehicles and through traffic. They also improve the safety and efficiency of highway intersections.

2.5 Benefits of access management

Road Users

- Face fewer decision points and traffic conflicts, which simplifies the task of driving, cycling or walking and may increase road user safety.
- Experience fewer traffic delays and may arrive more quickly at their destinations.

Businesses

- Are served by a more efficient highway network that captures a broader market area.
- Benefit from stable property values due to a well-managed highway corridor.
- Experience a more predictable and consistent development environment.
- The trucking industry benefits from reduced delay and increased safety, which results in lower transportation costs and shorter delivery times.

Government

- Preserves the government's investment in the infrastructure of the provincial highway network.
- Benefits from the lower cost of delivering an efficient and safe transportation network.
- Benefits from improved internal and intergovernmental coordination.
- Is more effective in accomplishing its transportation objectives.
- Provides effective tools to support and implement strong and effective land use planning reforms.

Municipalities

- Receive a safer transportation network.
- Benefit from less need for highway widening, which causes displacement of businesses, homes, and communities.
- Benefit from more attractive highway corridors.

- Help protect and preserve their investment in transportation facilities and may reduce capital improvement costs on their roadways.
- Are provided with a tool to help them make good land use planning decisions.
- Helps achieve goals, such as intensification that works without an increase in traffic congestion.

The recommendation for ACE to put forward to Planning & Environment Committee is suggested as follows:

The ACE recommends that the Discover Wonderland environmental assessment explores every possible avenue to avoid widening Wonderland Road to six lanes, whereas there are a number of alternative methods that provide better traffic flow, improved options outside of driving one's own personal vehicle (public transit, cycling, walking, etc.), and proper access management.

The public can provide comments online:
<https://getinvolved.london.ca/DiscoverWonderland>