

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CIVIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING ON MARCH 10, 2020
FROM:	KELLY SCHERR, P. ENG., MBA, FEC MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES AND CITY ENGINEER AND GEORGE KOTSIFAS P.ENG. MANAGING DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLIANCE SERVICES AND CHIEF BUILDING OFFICIAL
SUBJECT:	COMMENTS ON THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION'S DRAFT TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR SOUTHWEST ONTARIO

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the joint recommendation of the Managing Director, Environmental and Engineering Services and City Engineer and the Managing Director, Development and Compliance Services and Chief Building Official, the following comments and discussion **BE ENDORSED** by Council and be submitted by City Administration to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding *Connecting the Southwest: A Draft Transportation Plan for Southwestern Ontario.*

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

For additional information, please refer to the following committee reports:

- Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – November 25, 2019 - Climate Change Emergency
- Civic Works Committee – August 13, 2018 – Complete Streets Design Manual
- Civic Works Committee – May 28, 2018 – High Speed Rail
- Civic Works Committee – May 28, 2018 – Railway Rationalization
- Civic Works Committee – May 28, 2018 – Connected and Autonomous Vehicles
- Civic Works Committee – May 28, 2018 – Smart Moves Transportation Master Plan Accomplishments
- Civic Works Committee – July 17, 2017 – High Speed Rail
- Civic Works Committee - October 4, 2016 – Southwest Ontario's Public Transportation Opportunities
- Civic Works Committee – September 7, 2016 – London ON Bikes Cycling Master Plan
- Civic Works Committee – March 3, 2014 – London Road Safety Strategy

COUNCIL'S 2019-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

Municipal Council has recognized the importance of transit, improved mobility and improving travel to other cities through better transportation connectivity specifically regional transit connections in its 2019-2023 - Strategic Plan for the City of London as follows:

Strengthening Our Community

Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.

Building a Sustainable City

London's infrastructure is built, maintained, and operated to meet the long-term needs of our community. Londoners can move around the city safely and easily in a manner that meets their needs.

Growing our Economy

London will develop a top quality workforce. London is a leader in Ontario for attracting new jobs and investments.

Leading in Public Service

Increase the effectiveness of London's strategic advocacy.

BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with:

- An overview of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's (MTO) recently released report entitled: [Connecting the Southwest: A Draft Transportation Plan for Southwestern Ontario](#);
- City of London comments regarding MTO's draft plan with respect to local and regional mobility, accessibility and transportation options;
- To seek endorsement of a staff response to MTO regarding the draft transportation plan.

CONTEXT

In their 2019 budget, the provincial government "paused capital funding for high-speed rail" and committed to "examine options for improved connections between London, Kitchener and Toronto to spur economic activity in the region by improving mobility and increasing travel reliability" (2019 Ontario Budget, pg. 73). The Province further committed to bring forward a dedicated Southwest Ontario Transportation Plan in the Fall of 2019. This commitment was reiterated by the Minister of Transportation at the 2019 Association of Municipalities Annual Conference.

On January 17th, 2020 the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) released its regional plan for Southwest Ontario as the first of four plans that will be developed to form a long-term transportation plan for Ontario.

MTO's plan entitled: [Connecting the Southwest: A Draft Transportation Plan for Southwestern Ontario](#) is organized around five goals and associated actions summarized as follows:

1. Getting people moving and connecting communities

Notable actions identified in the plan include:

- Improved intercommunity bus service
- Improved public transit through infrastructure funding and gas tax programs
- Discussions with freight rail companies and others towards passenger rail enhancements

- Exploring opportunities to increase passenger rail service and train speeds in Southwestern Ontario including working with rail companies, VIA and Go Transit, to increase options for those travelling between London and Toronto as well as conducting technical reviews of rail corridors
- Establishing a task force with local mayors and Indigenous Chiefs to focus on improving connections between communities for all modes of transportation
- Working with municipal and federal partners to support active transportation connections within and between communities and to transit systems

2. Supporting a competitive open for business environment

Notable actions identified in the plan include:

- Explore opportunities to provide additional commuter parking lot spaces
- Technical studies to determine future provincial highway needs
- Consideration of large, slow moving farm equipment in road and rail design
- Supports to the trucking industry such as updating the Long Combination Vehicle Program and the reduced load periods

3. Improving safety

Some of the notable actions identified in the plan include:

- Highway 401 improvements from London to Tilbury
- Improvements to pavement marking technology and traffic control devices
- Exploring faster clearing of highways after collisions
- Update to the Emergency Detour Route guidelines
- Partnering to increase awareness of human trafficking along 400 series highways

4. Providing choice and convenience

Notable actions identified in the plan include:

- Establish partnerships with municipalities and emergency services to share and integrate traffic data and identify pilot project opportunities
- Investigate and identify actions to integrate different modes of travel including first mile/last mile connections to other modes
- Ongoing E-bike pilot program for municipalities
- Support transit oriented development at transit stations
- Support integration of transportation and technology such as smart phone applications, trip planning and increased use of transit

5. Preparing for the future

Notable actions identified in the plan include:

- Continue to support CV/AV technology and its development including allowing more testing of emerging technology on Ontario roads.
- Explore establishment of an innovation corridor on Highway 401 between London and Tilbury
- Review of locations for alternative fueling stations including electric and hydrogen
- Consider the impacts of climate change on transportation infrastructure
- Undertake an airport activity and infrastructure survey to assess the role that they play in economic development and public services

The plan also highlights previously announced provincial and federal investments in the region related to transit and transportation infrastructure including \$103 million under the Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (PTIS) for 10 [transit related projects](#) in London.

The need for an integrated transportation system is identified in the plan as well as future needs and opportunities related to:

- Intercommunity bus services
- More reliable passenger train service
- More local public transit
- A strong highway network
- Reliable local road network
- Regional airports and ferries

MTO identifies that the draft plan will evolve based on input from partners and stakeholders. A web-based survey has also been established to provide input on the plan and collect information regarding travel behaviours. The survey will remain open to collect information until March 17, 2020.

DISCUSSION

Improving regional transportation connections is vital to supporting London's continued growth and prosperity. Strong, accessible, convenient connections between London and the Southwestern Ontario region, as well as between London and major centers like Toronto, will help fulfill London's strategic vision as "our region's connection to the World".

To that end, London's submission intends to highlight the current and growing need for transportation connections, including by road, rail and air. Although highways will continue to be an essential component of the transportation network, projections show that there will be twice as many cars on Highway 401 within 20 years. As of 2016, there were an estimated 50,000 trips being made from around the region into London per day, and that number has certainly continued to grow. The Southwestern Ontario Transportation Plan should set out practical but ambitious approaches to managing the flow of people and goods between our region and the rest of the province, country, and the world, recognizing the important role that London plays as a centre for employment, healthcare, education and culture in this region.

London's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan includes direct and indirect references to the need to advance comprehensive transit and transportation initiatives, both within the city and as part of a broader regional effort.

Smart Moves Transportation Master Plan

The City's 2030 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is a long-term transportation strategy focused on improving mobility for residents of the City by providing viable choices through all modes of travel and shifting to a more sustainable transportation system. The Smart Moves Transportation Master Plan was approved by Council in 2012 and provides a mobility transportation plan that covers all modes of how people and commerce move about the City. It aims to improve all modes of transportation, while addressing and shaping the city's population growth and mobility needs.



The TMP categorized the proposed actions under five "Smart Moves":

1. Rethinking Growth to Support the Transportation Master Plan
Smart Moves suggests a strong link between land use and transportation and the London Plan operationalizes the land use framework required to support Smart Moves.

2. Taking Transit to the Next Level

The implementation of a rapid transit system will result in significant improvements in London's public transit system and is a central component of London's land use and transportation policy.

3. Actively Managing Transportation Demand

Healthy sustainable mobility choices are supported with various City programs.

4. Greater Investment in Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

5. More Strategic Program of Road Network Improvements

London's Response to MTO's Draft Transportation Plan

Recognizing London's current policies and programs related to transportation, mobility and options and the future opportunities related to Province's draft transportation plan for Southwestern Ontario, the following comments are provided to serve as the basis for a London response to MTO. The comments are grouped under four themes as follows:

1. Improved transportation connectivity for London

With evolving policy work underway at the provincial and federal levels, there are a number of intercity transportation initiatives that may present opportunities for increased passenger rail connectivity and service for London.

In June 2019, VIA Rail, in partnership with the Canadian Infrastructure Bank, announced plans to explore high frequency rail service on the existing corridor between Toronto and Quebec City. This project, if approved by the Government of Canada, would create new trains on dedicated tracks between Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto.

Amtrak, the largest American passenger rail service, is exploring opportunities to resuscitate passenger rail service connecting the United States and Canada. The proposal includes expanding Amtrak's existing higher-speed passenger service from Chicago to Detroit, the construction of a cross-border processing facility, and upgrades to the Windsor VIA Rail connection, where service would then continue on the existing VIA infrastructure through to Toronto. Passenger rail service from Detroit to Toronto last ran in 1967.

With significant interest for increased transportation connectivity to the east and west of the London region, it is important that the provincial and federal governments as well as private sector stakeholders are engaged to explore opportunities to connect London. As Southwestern Ontario's hub city, London's economic impact to Ontario's prosperity must be reflected in any plans for increasing inter-city connectivity in Ontario and beyond. Improved connectivity and rail service levels between London and the Greater Toronto area will continue to be vital for London residents, businesses, academic institutions and others in order to attract and retain employees. This would also complement existing intercommunity busing programming connecting communities such as Strathroy, Thorndale, Sarnia and St. Thomas into London as well as future expansions on the horizon.

In recognition of the importance of London to the broader region as an economic and employment hub, London is supportive of the province's recognition of the need for increased carpooling lots as these would not only support London's rapid transit initiative but also improve regional connectivity and support more sustainable travel decisions.

It is recommended that London pursue a leadership role in partnership with local and regional businesses, organizations and municipalities in developing the Southwest Ontario Transportation Plan. London is interested in working closely with both provincial and federal governments, as well as rail operators such as VIA, CN Rail, CP Rail, GO Transit, to ensure holistic solutions can be identified and implemented.

2. Active Transportation and Mobility Choices

MTO's draft plan identifies a network of nearly 1800 kilometres of cycling routes within Southwestern Ontario and demonstrates a willingness to work with municipalities and others to support transportation connections within and between communities and connections to transit systems. This is in alignment with the goals of London's Transportation Master Plan and Cycling Master Plan. The City is supportive of continuing to work with the province to achieve these goals and in particular interested in exploring new funding opportunities to support these programs.

3. Climate Change

On April 23, 2019, Council approved a declaration of a Climate Emergency and requested Civic Administration to report back on tangible actions that the municipality can undertake. A report to the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee on November 25, 2019 identified next steps and highlighted the interrelationship between programs, projects and strategies designed to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

Considering that transportation related emissions contribute the most significant portion of GHG production, it is expected that the provincial plan would include initiatives related to promotion of alternative, cleaner fuel use such as electricity and hydrogen. Provincial leadership will be necessary to further target the largest contributor to GHG in Ontario. This leadership and GHG reducing initiatives will be important on our path towards being carbon neutral by 2050; but more importantly, to make significant gains by 2030.

MTO's draft plan acknowledges the impacts that climate change is having on our transportation infrastructure and the need to adopt climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into decision making processes.

London is transitioning to a more sustainable transportation system by increasing opportunities for increased use of transit, walking and cycling. Historic provincial and federal investments toward London's 10 transit projects under the Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (PTIS) underscores the importance of these partnerships. Additional investments will support the City's commitment to long-term sustainability and resiliency.

4. Connected and Automated Vehicles

Related to the province's goal of preparing for the future, the City of London is underway with the development of a Connected and Automated Vehicle Strategy and is an active member of the Municipal Alliance for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles in Ontario (MACAVO). The Province is a key partner in this initiative and the City looks forward to an active role as the province continues to research, develop, test and pilot this technology in Ontario.

The province has identified Highway 401 in the London area as an "Innovation Corridor," where new transportation management products may be tested. The City would be interested in pursuing opportunities to leverage research, knowledge and funding associated with this initiative, maximizing private and academic investments already underway in the London area, Stratford and beyond.

SUMMARY

This report acknowledges the province’s recent draft Southwest Ontario Transportation Plan and the government’s commitment to work collaboratively to improve transportation and mobility services and options within the London area and beyond. The plan provides a description of a broad number of initiatives under five categories. Several of the plan objectives align and/or influence City of London transportation goals.

As a significant economic and employment hub for southwestern Ontario, London should play an active leadership role in working with the provincial government to shape the final transportation plan for this part of Ontario. This includes the opportunity for London elected officials and/or staff, as appropriate, to be involved with various task forces and committees associated in the draft plan. Upon Council endorsement, the response comments provided in this report will be conveyed to the Ministry of Transportation.

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