

Report to Civic Works Committee

To: Chair and Members
Civic Works Committee

From: Kelly Scherr, P. Eng., MBA, FEC
Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure

Subject: Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive Intersection
Improvements
Environmental Assessment Project File Report

Date: May 10, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive Intersection Improvements Environmental Assessment:

- a) Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive Intersection Improvements Environmental Assessment Study Project File Report Executive Summary **BE ACCEPTED**;
- b) A Notice of Study Completion for the Project **BE FILED** with the Municipal Clerk;
and,
- c) The Project File Report **BE PLACED** on the public record for a 30-day review period.

Executive Summary

Purpose

This report provides an overview of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) process that was completed and seeks approval to finalize the study and post it for the necessary 30-day public review period. The study identifies improvements to the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection.

Context

The City of London continues to develop and grow and to accommodate this growth, new infrastructure is required that recognizes the capacity needs of planned growth. The Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive/Kains Road intersection is currently a stop controlled intersection with certain restricted turning movements.

Oxford Street is a major corridor in the city that not only acts as an east/west link within the city, but also connects surrounding areas west of the city limits with the core, Fanshawe College and the London International Airport. The ongoing and future developments in West London and beyond the city limits are anticipated to increase the infrastructure pressure on the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection.

The implementation of complete streets improvements is important to create equitable access to the area. The improvements identified in this study will create an opportunity to enhance and improve the features of the roadway and to accommodate existing and future traffic demands including active transportation. The improvements will enhance the overall transportation network and provide better connectivity to adjacent communities by following the City's Complete Streets Design Manual approach.

The EA study area is located in the west area of the City of London. The study area limits extend approximately 200 m in each direction from the intersection and easterly to Westdel Bourne as shown on Figure 1.

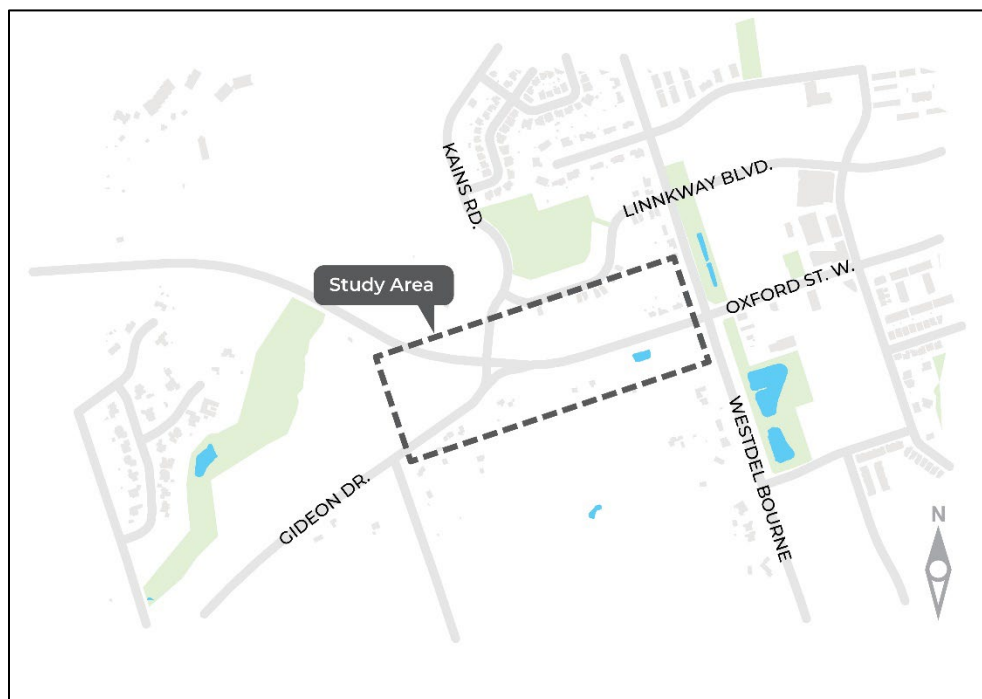


Figure 1: EA Study Area Map

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The following report supports the Strategic Plan through the strategic focus area of Building a Sustainable City by building new transportation infrastructure as London grows. The improvements to the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection will enhance safe and convenient mobility choices for automobiles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Civic Works Committee - June 19, 2012- London 2030 Transportation Master Plan
- Civic Works Committee - September 7, 2016 - London ON Bikes Cycling Master Plan
- Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – May 6, 2019 – Approval of 2019 Development Charges By-Law and DC Background Study
- Civic Works Committee – January 19, 2021 - Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive Intersection Improvements Environmental Assessment Study Appointment of Consulting Engineer

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Study Description

The Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection EA was carried out in accordance with Schedule 'B' of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) requirements. The Class EA process is approved under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act and outlines the process whereby municipalities can comply with the requirements of the Act.

The Class EA study has satisfied the requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act by providing a comprehensive, environmentally sound planning process with public participation. The Project File Report (PFR) documents the process followed to determine the recommended undertaking and the environmentally significant aspects of the planning, design, and construction of the proposed improvements. It describes the problem being addressed, the existing social, natural and cultural environmental considerations, planning and design alternatives that were considered, and a description of the recommended alternative.

The study area is located in the western area of the City of London. It extends approximately 200 m from the Oxford Street / Gideon Drive intersection, along Oxford Street West, Gideon Drive and Kains Road.

Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive are classified in The London Plan as Urban and Rural Thoroughfares respectively. Gideon Drive carries approximately 2,500 vehicles per day and Oxford Street West carries approximately 18,500 and 15,500 vehicles per day east and west of the intersection respectively.

The PFR also identifies environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures, commitments to further work, and consultation associated with the implementation of the project.

2.2 Problem and Opportunity Statement

Phase I of the Municipal Class EA (MCEA) process involved the identification of the problem and opportunity statement. Based on the review of existing conditions, servicing studies, planning documents, development proposals, preliminary traffic studies and collision data, the following summarizes the problems and opportunities within the study area:

- Intersection issues: Decreasing level of service at the intersection in response to ongoing and planned development on the west side of the City, the connection of Kains Road, and associated increases in traffic through the intersection.
- Active Transportation: Need to improve active transportation facilities within the study area and provide system connections, as per the City's Cycling Master Plan and the London Plan.
- Climate Change: Need to support the City's Climate Emergency Action Plan goals.
- Infrastructure Upgrades: Need to improve stormwater management and upgrade underground services including watermain, storm and sanitary sewer.

2.3 Alternative Solutions

Phase II of the MCEA process includes an inventory of the existing socio-economic, cultural and natural environments to identify alternative solutions to address the problem/opportunity statement. Alternative solutions are identified and evaluated based on their ability to reduce impacts to the socio-economic, archaeology and cultural heritage, natural environment, climate change, transportation engineering and cost. Alternative solutions considered for the study area included:

1. **Do Nothing** – Maintain existing condition of the Oxford and Gideon intersection
2. **Signalized Intersection** – Improvements consist of installation of traffic signals, crosswalks and cycling facilities
3. **Single-Lane Roundabout Intersection** – Implement a single lane roundabout, crosswalks and cycling facilities
4. **Multi-Lane Roundabout Intersection** – Implement a multi-lane roundabout with an additional lane to improve operation and accommodate near-term growth. Install crosswalks and cycling facilities.

2.4 Recommended Alternative

The recommended alternative considers transportation facilities for all road users (pedestrians, cyclists and drivers) as per the City's Complete Streets requirements and potential impacts to traffic operations, safety, natural, socio-economic and cultural features, and costs. The recommended alternative was selected, developed and refined through consultation with Indigenous communities, agencies, advisory committees, stakeholders, and the public. The recommended alternative was determined to be Alternative 4 – Multi-Lane Roundabout which is shown in Figure 2.

The recommended alternative includes the following design considerations:

- Additional right-hand/through lane for westbound vehicles to accommodate projected traffic volumes
- Left turn lane into future development on the southeast side of the intersection (may be converted to a right-in, right-out entrance in the future)
- Multi-use paths on all approaches that would connect to existing cycling paths of travel and connect to future potential boulevard sidewalks and bike paths with further review of the details of this design planned in detail design
- New pedestrian/cyclist crossings at each leg of the roundabout
- Full illumination of the roundabout, and roadway illumination extending to Westdel Bourne
- Consideration for climate change, using the Climate Emergency Screening Tool criteria, including improving active transportation facilities and resiliency of the stormwater management system
- Minor property required where existing ditch encroaches onto private property
- Landscaping and urban design opportunities to create a gateway to the City of London
- Provides an improved connection to the Thames Valley Parkway at the northwest corner of the intersection.

Roundabouts are good solutions for intersections that have skewed approaches like the Gideon Drive approach. Roundabouts have also proven to be effective at improving safety near the edge of the urban growth area by effectively slowing traffic entering developing areas of the City from rural areas. Roundabout design has been shown in London to greatly reduce the potential for severe right-angle collisions at higher speed locations.

Active transportation has been carefully considered in this design to support healthy lifestyles in surrounding developments. Pedestrian crossings are designed where crossings are narrow, speeds are reduced and refuge islands exist. Cyclists will have the option of travelling through the roundabout if feeling confident or using boulevard pathways if desiring more comfort.

The roundabout design is predicted to function well and accommodate growth for the foreseeable future. The recommended option also provides flexibility to accommodate a future Oxford Street corridor widening to four-lanes with only an incremental roundabout expansion. A future northbound to eastbound right-turn bypass lane is also possible as a future operational improvement phase.



Figure 2: Multi-Lane Roundabout is the preferred solution for the Oxford-Gideon intersection

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Preliminary Cost Estimates

A preliminary construction cost estimate for the ultimate improvements identified in the study has been prepared, including engineering, utility relocations, roadway construction, sanitary servicing, street lighting, landscaping, and staging. The total preliminary construction estimate developed during the environmental assessment is \$5,340,000 including contingency and engineering fees. The breakdown of the cost estimate developed during the environmental assessment is shown below. There are expected to be opportunities to recover the cost of the sanitary servicing and a portion of the storm sewers cost directly related to the proposed development in the area. The total estimated project cost is higher than the approved project budget of \$3,825,914 (TS1332). The EA cost estimate is based on the current costs of similar projects and reflects recent extraordinary inflationary increases in construction material prices, and labour market conditions. The Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection improvements project budget will be recommended for adjustment during the next multi-year budget update process.

Table 1: Environmental Assessment Cost Estimate for Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive Intersection Improvements

Item	Total
Miscellaneous / General (Bonding, Insurance, Traffic Control, Pre-Condition Surveys)	\$388,500
Removals	\$829,725
Storm Sewers and Culverts	\$180,000
Sanitary Servicing	\$210,000
Roadworks	\$1,767,050
Street Lighting	\$302,000
Hydro Relocations and Property Acquisition	\$140,000
SUBTOTAL	\$3,817,275
Engineering and Construction Administration (20%)	\$763,455
Contingency (20%)	\$763,455
TOTAL	\$5,340,000

4.0 Key Issues and Considerations

4.1 Property Impacts

The avoidance of property requirements was a key criterion in the identification and evaluation of the alternative solutions by the project team.

As part of this study, it is recommended that the City acquire frontage from one property on the north-west corner of the intersection. The city will also take ownership and maintenance of the privately owned culvert as it conveys drainage from within the public road allowance.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the property owner, and the owner is aware of the proposed improvements and effects to the property.

4.2 Public and Agency Consultation

Consultation was a key component of this Class EA study to provide an opportunity for stakeholder groups, the public and Indigenous communities to gain an understanding of the study process and provide feedback. The key stakeholders included residents, interested public, agencies, and those who may be affected by the project. Seven Indigenous communities were sent notifications about this project including Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island), Caldwell First Nation, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, Delaware Nation at Moraviantown and Oneida Nation of the Thames.

A Notice of Study Commencement was issued in February 2021. The study team received correspondence from the public and agencies indicating their interest in the study and requesting to be kept informed.

The Public Information Centre (PIC) was presented on November 17, 2021 in an online format. The PIC introduced the project outlining the rationale behind it, identified existing conditions, alternative solutions and the recommended alternative. It served as an opportunity for the public, stakeholders and Indigenous communities to review the project information, ask questions, and provide input to the members of the study team.

Project information was also presented to the following City of London Advisory Committees for feedback: Cycling Advisory Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee, Environmental Ecological Planning Advisory Committee and the London Advisory Committee on Heritage.

Agencies and stakeholders which required information updates pertaining to them were notified at study milestones and during specific phases of the study. In general, all agencies and stakeholders understand the need for intersection improvements. Some had concerns related to cut-through traffic on nearby roads and impacts during construction for access to properties and also nearby groundwater wells. Mitigation of potential impacts involves the avoidance or minimization of potential impacts through good design, construction practices, and/or restoration and enhancement activities. Detailed mitigation measures will be finalized in consultation with impacted property owners, City, Upper Thames Regional Conservation Authority (UTRCA), and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) as part of detailed design.

During the upcoming 30-day public review, the PFR would typically be made available both on the City of London website and also at the public library. If libraries are closed due to public health recommendations, the PFR will be made available on the City of London website and alternative formats will be made available upon request. As per Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' (MECP) request, the Project File Report (PFR) has been submitted for their technical review. The Project File Report Executive Summary is attached as Appendix A.

If a member of the public chooses, they may make a request to the MECP for an order requiring a higher level of study (i.e. requiring an individual/comprehensive EA approval before being able to proceed), or that conditions be imposed (e.g., require further studies). These requests will be considered only on the grounds that the requested order may prevent, mitigate or remedy adverse impacts on constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights.

4.3 Implementation

It is estimated that the construction of the project will begin in 2024 and could be undertaken in one construction season. Coordination with adjacent City projects, property owners, and regulatory agencies is planned for early in the design process, providing ample time for consultation. Network traffic management and a communications plan will be developed during detailed design to inform road users, outline detours during potential closures, and instruct local traffic movement. Access to properties will be maintained during construction.

Conclusion

Improvements to the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection are necessary to accommodate ongoing and future developments on the west side of the city. A Schedule B Municipal Class EA was undertaken to confirm the preferred long-term solution for the intersection. The PFR has been completed and will be reviewed by the MECP prior to posting for the final public review.

Alternative solutions were developed to address the problems and opportunities. The recommended alternative for the Oxford Street West and Gideon Drive intersection is to create a new roundabout with new accommodation for pedestrians and cyclists, increased capacity for drivers, safe access points to future developments, full illumination of the roundabout and landscaping opportunities to create a gateway to the City of London. Roundabouts have proven to be effective at improving safety near the edge of the urban development area by effectively slowing traffic entering the City from surrounding rural areas.

Consultation was a key component of this study. The Class EA was prepared with input from Indigenous communities, advisory committees, agencies, utilities, emergency service providers and property owners in proximity to the study.

Pending Council approval, a Notice of Study Completion will be filed, and the PFR will be placed on public record for a 30-day review period. Stakeholders and the public are encouraged to provide input and comments regarding the study during this time. Accommodation will be made for those requiring a hard copy review. Requests for a higher level of study or conditions may be submitted to the MECP based on impacts to constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights.

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Recommended by: Kelly Scherr, P. Eng., MBA, FEC, Deputy City Manager,
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Attach: Appendix A – Project File Report Executive Summary

c: Henry Huotari, RVA
Paul Yanchuk, City of London
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