



POLICY RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE: Political Action Committee

SUBJECT: Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor (MPTC)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, in principle, support the Mid-Peninsula Transportation Corridor on the condition that the study areas and applicable environmental assessments for Halton be separated from those pertaining to the Niagara to Hamilton portion; and, that any transportation needs be reviewed and solutions developed within the framework of a comprehensive inter-regional transportation strategy, based on the strategies outlined by the Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The MTO has been conducting several studies for the past several years, including a Needs Assessment for a proposed 400 series multilane highway to connect Fort Erie to the Western GTA. Originally, the connection would be to the 403 between Hamilton and Brantford, primarily to work as a trade corridor between Niagara and Detroit.

The City of Burlington has expressed concern on the intended routing for this Mid Peninsula Transportation Corridor (MPTC). Of particular concern is the proposed corridor "C" which would traverse through north Burlington to join the 407 near Walker's Line. The City feels this route would have negative environmental impacts, particularly on the Niagara Escarpment. The City also feels it would put pressure to extend the currently defined urban-rural boundary.

The Burlington Chamber is in support of addressing the transportation crisis in the GTA. If the MPTC has a role in this solution, the Chamber favors its construction. However, the general feeling is that the MPTC, in isolation, will do little to fix the GTA's issues. The chamber, therefore, believes a full transportation review is still necessary. Such a review would look at all possible solutions, including roads, rail and rapid transit. At the same time, the Chamber believes such a review should not stop the progress of the originally intended route of the Mid-Peninsula Highway. To that end, the Chamber supports the City in the call for the Environmental Assessment to be separated into two distinct study areas: the Niagara to Hamilton area; and, the Halton area.

The Chamber, in this policy resolution, is not addressing the funding of construction and operation of the MPTC (i.e., toll or no toll). That will be addressed at a future date with a separate policy resolution.

BACKGROUND REPORT:

The Mid Peninsula Transportation Corridor (MPTC) is a proposed transportation corridor that includes as its centerpiece a 400 series multilane highway from Fort Erie/Niagara area to the Hamilton/Burlington area, with potential connections to 407/403/401 (Mid Peninsula Highway – MPH).

The process that has been followed by the Ministry of Transportation has resulted in two important documents pertaining to the MPTC: a Needs Assessment document, which details the rationale for the

MPTC, and the Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference (EA ToR), which serves as the framework for a Route Location EA Study that will determine a preferred route for the proposed MPTC.

The Chamber's involvement to date has consisted of a number of initiatives:

- A fax-back survey to gauge Chamber members' MPTC perceptions;
- Review and analysis of documents issued by a variety of organizations including the MTO, the NEC, Conservation Halton, the City of Burlington, and surrounding Chambers of Commerce/ Boards of Trade;
- Participation in a number of MTO Public Information Centres regarding the MPTC; and,
- Active member of the City of Burlington's Mid Peninsula Stakeholders Advisory Group.

A number of issues have been identified with respect to the MPTC and the associated planning process. Some of these issues are listed below:

- The MPTC may not resolve congestion problems in the Burlington area, particularly on the QEW. In fact, depending on the route selected, the MPH may increase congestion problems in the Burlington area.
- The MPTC is not being developed within the framework of a comprehensive GTA/inter-regional transportation strategy, nor does it appear that it is being developed within the context of the Central Ontario Smart Growth strategies. As a result of these limitations, the MPTC may not adequately address the transportation needs of the two distinct geographic areas involved.
- As trucks have a high sensitivity to tolls and are unlikely to use a tolled highway, tolling the MPTC may not accomplish some of the stated objectives of the MPTC, namely, reducing congestion on existing roadways and improving the international trade corridor between the US and Central Ontario. Burlington MPP Cam Jackson indicated to the Chamber that the MPTC highway would in all likelihood be a tolled highway.
- The MPTC would put a significant pressure on Burlington's rural/urban boundary, contrary to official regional and municipal planning.
- The Escarpment is an important natural feature of Burlington but based on the corridor indicated by the MTO for route selection, the MPTC will have serious implications for the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area. One of the routes proposed in the Needs Assessment would cross the Escarpment north of Dundas Street to join with the 407.
- The MPTC would have a negative impact on many of Burlington's other natural features and would potentially impact agricultural activity in Burlington's rural areas.
- Significant public funding will be required to develop the MPTC. However, due to questions raised by congestion problems and tolling issues, it is unclear what return Burlington businesses would realize on this investment of their tax dollars.

There is a need for transportation solutions to address projected growth in the Greater Toronto Area. The MPTC studies, especially within the framework of a scoped EA, do not adequately address these specific geographic needs based on the issues listed above. The MPTC should be developed within the framework of a comprehensive inter-regional transportation strategy and should be based on Smart Growth strategies to ensure that any solution to the transportation needs of Central Ontario will benefit all taxpayers and businesses.

DISSEMINATION:

Letter no later than June 20th, 2003 to:

Environmental Assessment & Approvals Branch
Ministry of the Environment
2 St. Clair Avenue West, Floor 12A
Toronto, Ontario
M4V 1L5
Attention: Solange Desautels, Special Project Officer

Copies to: Ministry of Transportation, City of Burlington, Region of Halton, Media

Date: June, 2003

Passed by Board of Directors on June 25, 2003