

# Freeway corridor could be expanded by MTO

# Additional analysis - Three alternatives

Focused assessment of three options in the Halton area:

- New corridor recommended in Draft Strategy
- A much wider Highway 401 and large interchange at Highways 401/407
- New corridor across Halton with municipal link to Highways 401/407

## Politicians and public unhappy with GTA corridor

Promises to study alternative transportation routes did little to placate Town councillors who pilloried a Ministry of Transportation (MTO) project manager during last Monday's Council meeting. For 90-minutes, Jim Wang, the MTO project coordinator, and to a lesser extent, consultant Neil Ahmed withstood a blistering attack that included councillors calling the MTO's handling of the GTA corridor study "misleading and disrespectful," and "degrading."

In response to a concerted public/political campaign against the so-called 4-3 option in the GTA West Corridor Study – a freeway across the south end of town – the MTO and its consultant agreed to further evaluate alternatives, including the Town's suggestion to widen the 401 to 12 lanes to find the best balance to meet transportation/travel demands to 2031, looking at environmental impacts, land use and costs.

Mayor Rick Bonnette led the onslaught, suggesting there is no benefit to the 4-3 freeway option, noting the Town accepts one highway corridor – a north-south route along the east side of the Town. Wang said the 4-3 options offers less highway congestion. Bonnette did not get the assurance he wanted – that if widening the 401 is feasible, the MTO would drop option 4-3 plan. Wang would only say they would look at the impacts of all of the options to find the "better

or best final solution." Bonnette accused MTO of prejudicing the debate with a recent newsletter indicating an expanded 401 highway would impact residences and businesses. A Town study found no impacts at all.

Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson said the MTO was "misleading and disrespectful" to underplay the extent of public opposition to the 4-3 option – more than 10,000 protest postcards were sent to the Minister – and asked if the proposed freeway would be a toll road. Wang said that it is not within the scope of the analysis.

In response to criticism the GTA study was weighted to consider transportation issues over the environmental and agricultural ones, Ahmet said they would assess impacts on agricultural land using updated maps, and "windshield" assessments, a term that annoyed Ward Two Councillor Bryan Lewis. "If that is a way of doing a study on something that is so impacting on our community, my immediate reaction is I hope there is mud on your windshield so you can't see out of them," Lewis said, adding it was a "very misleading and very degrading" to the agricultural community.

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary questioned why a proposed corridor from the 400 in Vaughn to Guelph/Kitchener, running north of Acton, had been abandoned. Wang said it was assessed and evaluated, but it was "outperformed"

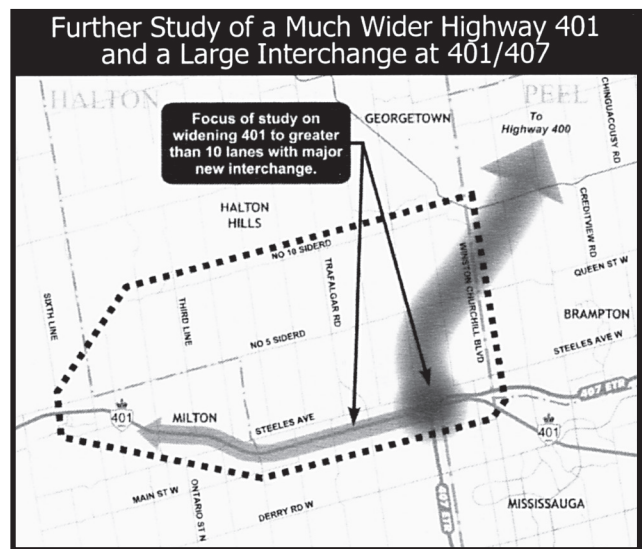
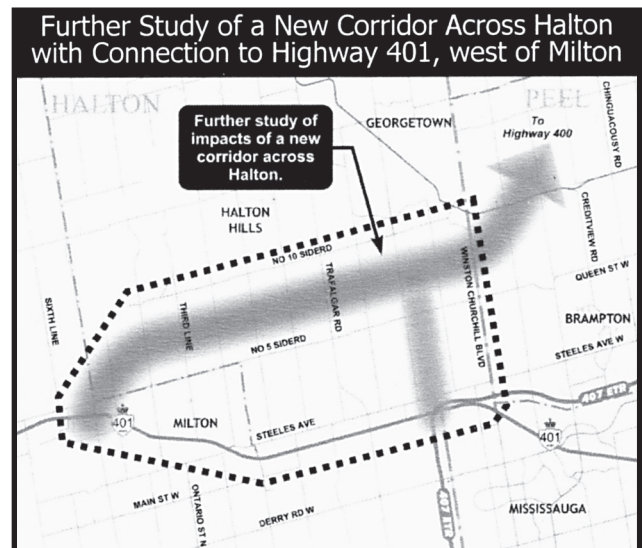
by other options, and not recommended by the MTO. O'Leary also suggested the MTO would create a "dog's breakfast," like the one that exists on the 401 in the airport area.

Acton Councillor Jon Hurst is concerned the MTO will consult with, but not listen to, new opinions. "I can't fathom why you would spend the time, effort and money to take a look at an option that is so negative to our community..." Hurst said.

Mayor Bonnette asked if the timeframe for the corridor study could be speeded up so affected landowners are not on hold for up to seven years as the route and design are developed. The Town's consultant said the 401 could be widened with minimal impact, leading Bonnette to ask, "how much of a pound of flesh do you want Halton Hills to give up?" adding the Town won't be "patsies" and accept the option 4-3.

Following the meeting, resident Wendy Bruchal, founder/spokesperson of CRASHH (Concerned Residents Against Superhighway in Halton Hills) said it was "regretful" that the MTO had not talked to the farming community before now, and "shocking" that the MTO could look outside of the proposed corridor for a route. "Nobody is safe just because they don't live between Five and Ten Sideroads," Bruchal said.

Councillors asked staff to prepare a report on the options as presented by the MTO as quickly as possible.



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Wellington-Halton Hills



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