

Main St. underpass moves another step forward

By **Melanie Hennessey**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Plans are slowly but surely moving forward for a much-needed road underpass on Main Street at the CPR tracks, just east of Ontario Street.

The Town's community services committee supported a motion Tuesday night that directs staff to file an environmental study report for the work that's expected to cost \$30 million and take two years to finish.

"As commercial development continues on Main Street, it will become more and more necessary to improve traffic flow and allow for better access to the downtown business area and central business district," said Mayor Gord Krantz. "Main Street will also be a much safer and environmentally-friendly road by separating road vehicles from train traffic and eliminating idling while traffic waits for trains to clear the crossing."

Town staff and consultants reported on about two years' worth of environmental studies and public consultation during Monday's meeting that pointed to the need for an underpass on Main Street.

The project would entail creating a long steel girder bridge to carry four train tracks over the busy road. Main Street would be realigned to the south as a four-lane under-

pass to the tracks, with a two-lane service road — where Main Street currently is — created on the north side for access to businesses.

"The construction of an underpass is always a major project and this one is unique due to the sharp angle at which the CPR tracks cross Main Street," said Town Engineering Services Director Paul Cripps. "Consequently, the bridge span is long, making for a more structurally challenging project."

A couple councillors in attendance questioned the need for the fourth train track, with Wards 2 and 4 Councillor Colin Best noting he can't see the Town spending millions of dollars for something that's "never going to be used."

Cripps said it has always been staff's intention to negotiate around the fourth track, but pointed out CP may want to eliminate its 15 per cent financial contribution to the project if the track is eliminated.

Scherer said while he thinks Main Street is an important transportation corridor, he's not convinced the Town is getting its money's worth on the project that he said would alleviate "a bit of a congestion problem."

"I just wonder if we should be spending the \$30 million somewhere else," he said.

Cripps pointed to the long traffic delays that plague the area when a train goes through. He also said the underpass

is an important component in having an effective transportation network in the community.

Ward 2 Councillor Mike Boughton shared similar sentiments and defended the need for the underpass.

"I know it costs \$30 million, but this has to be done for this community," he said. "Mr. Scherer, I'm sorry but I think it's a good project to have. We need it for the people who go from the west to the east."

Scherer said he never indicated it was a bad project, but just wanted to know the rationale behind it.

"A lot of people think there is a rationale for it," Boughton noted.

Mayor Gord Krantz pointed out that between the underpass and a few other projects on the committee's agenda Monday night, the Town is looking at \$35 to \$40 million in expenses.

He noted that budget time is coming up, so "we better sit down and look at some of those priorities hard and fast."

He also asked what the tax impact could be if at least half of the aforementioned expenses were to go on the tax base.

Director of Corporate Services and Treasurer Linda Leeds said she wouldn't want to look at the projects in isolation and speculate on what the tax impact could be.

Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau pointed out that in a survey conducted last year, one third of local residents polled said they'd be willing to pay a special tax levy to fund infrastructure projects.

"Yes, we have to be cognizant of the tax impact but we also have to provide services," she said. "If there are things that are needed we do have to find a way to fund them."

The design process for the underpass, which will include more public consultation, is expected to start next year. Construction would then get underway in 2009 or 2010. The Town plans to maintain access for trains, along with vehicles going to businesses adjacent to the construction zone, with the exception of some weekend road closures.

The matter will go before council October 22 for consideration.

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Part of Guelph Line closed for rail work

A portion of Guelph Line in Campbellville will be closed next week to facilitate emergency maintenance work by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The stretch between Campbell Avenue East and No. 3 Sideroad will be shut down from 9 a.m. on Monday until 7 a.m. on Thursday.

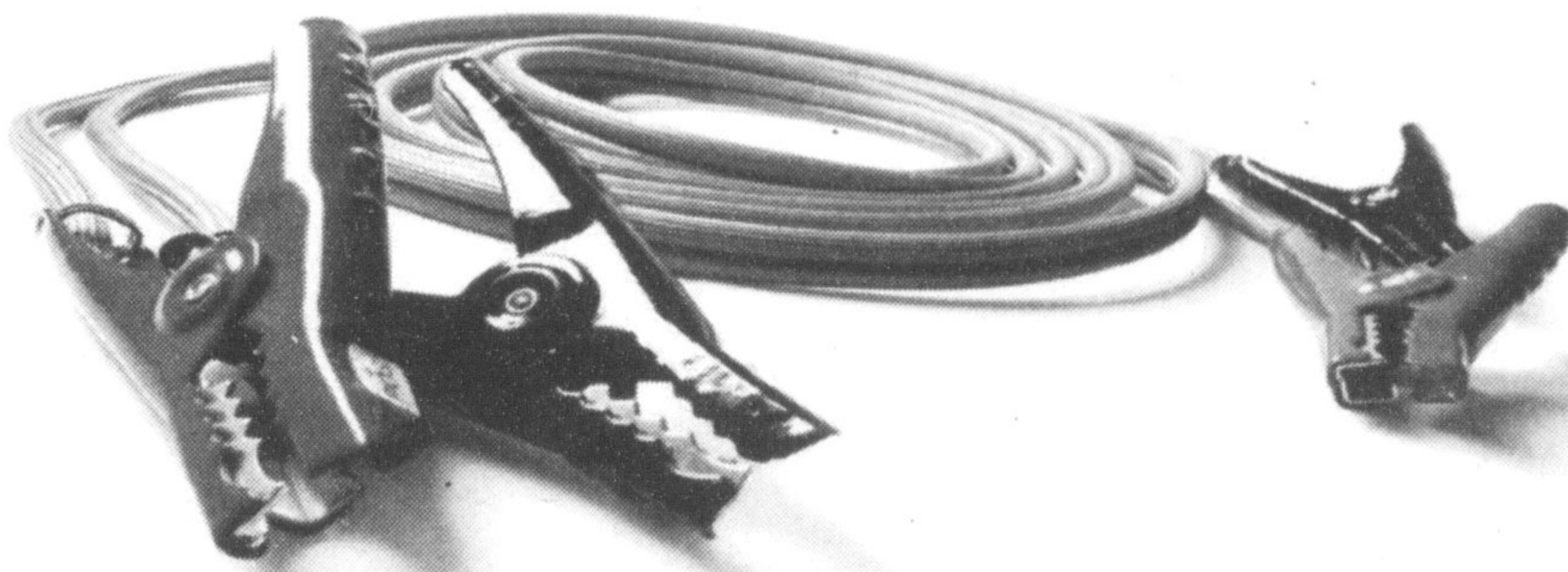
Temporary road closure signage will be posted on Guelph Line, including truck and car detour routes. Only local access will be provided.

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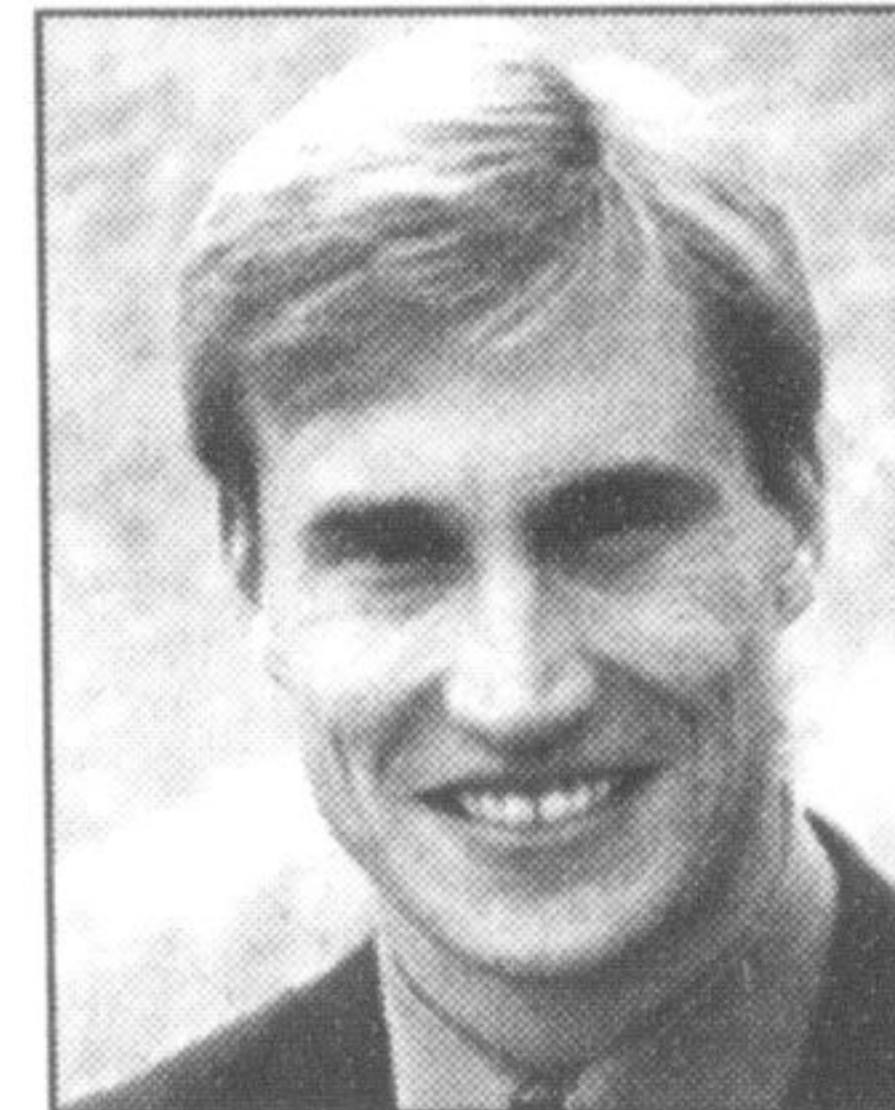


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