

# THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION'S SUBMISSION FOR THE 2011

## Transportation of Canada Environmental Achievement Awards



## 407 East Environmental Assessment – Stakeholder Consultation Process / Community Value Plan

## **Transportation of Canada Environmental Achievement Awards (2011)**

### **Name of Program / Project:**

407 East Environmental Assessment Stakeholder Consultation Process – Community Value Plan

### **Overview / Project Description:**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), in consultation with the Region of Durham undertook a highly complex \$31 million combined Environmental Assessment (EA) and Preliminary Design (PD) study to address the long-term provincial transportation needs in the Region of Durham and surrounding area. The result was an approved 70 km highway/transitway transportation facility extending the existing 407 transportation corridor easterly from its current terminus at Brock Road in Pickering to Highway 35/115 in Clarington, with two north-south links connecting Highway 401 to the new 407 East Transportation Corridor.

### **Degree of Innovation:**

Public interaction, consultation and participation were important, yet challenging aspects, to incorporate into a project of this scope and size. Public consultation needed to be conducted in a fair and effective manner since numerous citizens/stakeholders owned property or operated businesses may be impacted by the undertaking.

The 407 East Project Team responded to this challenge by developing a stakeholder consultation process entitled the Proactive Involvement Plan (PIP). The objective of the PIP was to facilitate effective, proactive and continuous public and stakeholder involvement in the EA and PD project.

The PIP provided numerous venues and opportunities for two-way communication with the public and interested stakeholders including Public Information Centres (PICs) – 5 rounds at 5 locations, property owner information sessions, a direct project phone line, and individual 'kitchen table' meetings. There were additional avenues for the public and stakeholders to provide input and comments to the Project Team including comment sheets, the project website, participation on a voluntary 407 East Community Advisory Group (CAG) and through customized MTO presentations held for local organizations such as Region's Heritage Committees, Agricultural Advisory Committees and the Soil and Crop Improvement Associations. The ministry also held workshop sessions with interested First Nation (FN) groups to provide them with project information and an opportunity to address any FN related issues or concerns.

In addition to the CAG, the ministry established a Regulatory Agency Group (RAG) and Municipal Technical Advisory Group (MTAG). Regular meetings were held with both groups throughout the 5 year EA study.

The centrepiece of the PIP was the Community Value Plan (CVP); a new and innovative program design to enhance and engage active stakeholder/public participation in the EA process. The CVP used Context Sensitive Solutions to develop a collaborative program to further engage stakeholders to participate in the EA process. The CVP's goal was to gather and understand the cultural, social, historical and/or environmental concerns of residents living in communities or in close proximity to the proposed route.

Through the CVP process the public assisted the project team in identifying a broad range of historical, environmental, social and environmental features present within the Study Area. The project team worked directly with the participants to:

- identify key areas of concern such as cultural, social, historical, environmental, etc., within communities located adjacent to and in close proximity to the proposed 407 East corridor;
- actively promote and encourage input from potentially affected communities;
- maintain open, timely and honest communication in the decision-making process;
- promote and facilitate early and continuous stakeholder involvement to ensure timely input to the decision-making process; and
- consider strategies that will retain and/or enhance the character of potentially affected communities; and document discussions and decisions in an open, transparent, and accessible format.

The project team determined the most effective way of initiating the CVP process was to arrange for a series of public workshops. An introductory session was held in June 2008 just prior to PIC #4 and three workshops were held through the fall of 2008. Approximately 40 people attended each of the workshops. **Exhibit 1** provides an overview of the CVP process with the public.

### Exhibit 1: Summary of CVP Process

Summary of CVP process				
Pre-involvement	➤ Introductory Session	➤ Workshop #1	➤ Workshop #2	➤ Workshop #3
<p>The invitation to participate was advertised at the PIC's, in 407 East newsletters, and on the project website.</p> <p>People attending the workshops were encouraged to inform others of the CVP process and the opportunity to participate.</p>	<p>Questionnaires were used to obtain additional input and to document collective ideas regarding the cultural, social, historical and environmental features/values of the community.</p>	<p>The identified cultural, social, historical and environmental features were identified and ranked in order of importance.</p>	<p>The MTO Provided straw model designs, which were used to illustrate and compare potential mitigation measures and enhancement strategies.</p> <p>Mitigation measures and enhancement strategies were presented, refined and then grouped into similar themes.</p>	<p>A draft of the CVP was presented for further discussion and comment. The draft was updated and presented at PIC #5 for additional public review and input.</p> <p>The CVP was revised per PIC #5 comments and incorporated into the EA.</p>

Based on the comments and input received from the public and interested stakeholders through the CVP workshops, the Project Team was able to identify opportunities to improve the design of the corridor, through the inclusion of additional mitigation and enhancements. Improvements consisted of additional mitigation measures, such as enhanced wetland restoration, landscaping screening and strategic placement of wildlife crossings (**Appendix A: Exhibit 1**). Other enhancement techniques discussed at the workshop included the addition of community gateway features, and bridge relief art work. An artist's rendition of the proposed bridge relief art work on the Simcoe Street overpass in Oshawa can also be seen in **Appendix A: Exhibit 2**. This example reflects the equestrian heritage of Windfield's Farms, the home and resting place of Northern Dancer. The improvements were documented in a draft *Recommended Community Value Plan*, which was presented to stakeholders for review and comment at the final round of Public Information Centres (PIC) for the 407 East EA project. Additional comments received during the PIC were incorporated into the final documentation.

The final CVP was completed in consultation with municipalities. The final *Recommended Community Value Plan* was included as part of the final documentation for the *407 East EA Report* and the ideas developed during the process were captured in the *407 East Environmental Assessment Landscape Composition Impact Assessment Report*. In addition, the *EA Report* included a commitment to further develop, finalize and implement the ideas developed as part of the CVP. An overview of the CVP process can be viewed in poster attached in **Appendix A: Exhibit 3**.

The PIP and the CVP programs resulted in a very successful consultation and participation process with the public and broader stakeholders. The PIP and CVP exceeded the measures identified in the projects approved Terms of Reference and helped to create an atmosphere of trust with members of the local communities. The 407 East Project Team was able to understand the priorities of local residents and worked to ensure that the public's concerns were addressed. In addition, to ensure that the ideas developed as part of the CVP were carried through the project during its subsequent design phases, the enhancement measures and techniques were included as commitments in the formal provincial Environmental Assessment Report submitted to the Ministry of the Environment for approval in August 2009.

### **Contribution to the Protection and Enhancement of the Environment:**

The enhanced stakeholder consultation program and the CVP allowed MTO to identify areas of concerns to local residents and respond with additional environmental mitigation and enhancement measures. Some of the environmental mitigation enhancement measures included the following initiatives:

- Naturalizing surplus MTO owned lands to its original vegetative state. (Surplus lands are remnant parcels of lands that were amicably acquired by MTO as part of the 407 East project, but which are not directly required for the construction of the undertaking)

- Providing an enhanced landscaping / greening plan
- Establishing new woodlots and forested areas on surplus lands
- Creating a healthy butternut tree population in Region of Durham through the planting of over 1600 trees on MTO and conservation authority lands.
- Restoring impacted wetland areas through the creation of additional wetland areas (example: Farewell Creek Complex along the East Durham Link – see **Appendix A: Exhibit 1**)
- Designing longer bridges to span sensitive valley crossings and wetland areas.
- Establishing wildlife crossings to maintain wildlife movements and migration patterns
- Including community gateway features
- Incorporating relief art work on bridges and First Nations imagery into architectural designs
- Developing a program to monitor planted vegetation in and around the 407 East corridor to ensure the forested and landscaped areas created as part of the 407 East's final design are successfully established
- Monitoring designated wildlife passages to ensure that the design adequately meets the needs of the wildlife within the area.
- Eliminating evasive species within the right-of-way wherever feasible
- Replacing impacted / displaced forest and wetland areas

#### **Financial Implications Associated with the Initiative:**

- The construction of the 407 East is expected to provide significant economic spin-off and benefit the community by improving the mobility of goods and people in Durham Region and eastern Greater Toronto Area (GTA). During its construction millions of dollars will be spent on purchasing supplies from local businesses, and it will create approximately 13,000 jobs for the first phase alone.
- The 407 East Extension is important for The Region of Durham, Peterborough, and Kawartha communities. Once complete, Highway 407 will create opportunities for business, population and employment growth
- The Project Team was responsible for the management of four consultant teams: one for the EA and three for the preliminary design with a total budget of \$31 million. This was done in an efficient and professional manner ensuring the terms of each agreement were respected and all tasks carried out on time and within budget. A co-operative and respectful association was fostered between MTO and the consultants resulting in a cohesive team effort.
- It is estimated that the additional costs associated with environmental mitigation and enhancement measures to improve the cultural, social, historical and environmental features identified by the public as part of the PIP and CVP process provide significant overall benefits for a project of this magnitude.

## **Overall Applicability to Transportation and the Need for the Project:**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) in consultation with the Region of Durham, its constituents and surrounding municipalities, undertook an Individual EA study to address the long-term transportation needs in the Region of Durham and surrounding area. Major deficiencies exist within the transportation system in the Region of Durham, which negatively affected the movement of people and goods, and potentially adversely affect the natural and social environment. As population and employment figures grow, this situation would be exacerbated without providing additional capacity and/or demand management measures.

In recognition of the identified transportation deficiencies, the Province of Ontario, through the MTO through work completed through the Environmental Assessment study, proposed an extension of the existing 407 transportation corridor from its current terminus at Brock Road in Pickering to Highway 35/115 in Clarington, including two north-south links connecting Highway 401 to the proposed extension of 407, one in West Durham (Whitby) and the other in East Durham (Clarington). The transportation corridor includes a highway component and a transitway component (i.e. a dedicated corridor for transit).

The EA Study also recognized and recommended a number of other initiatives to address the long-term transportation needs in the region. These recommendations included, enhancements to local and inter-regional transit services; Improvements to existing roads (Regional and Provincial); and Improvements to existing transportation operations through demand and systems management.

The implementation of the 407 East Transportation Corridor will help relieve congestion on existing and future parallel corridors, improve inter-regional transit mobility via the dedicated transitway, and help to facilitate municipal transit improvements by relieving some congestion on municipal roads.

## **Result:**

The success of the enhanced stakeholder consultation process and the CVP lead to the development of an acceptable transportation corridor that was widely endorsed by the community and other stakeholders. The CVP process helped transform the ministry's proposed route into a transportation corridor that better fit into its physical setting (**Appendix A: Exhibit 4**) and responded to the community and stakeholder concerns. The mitigation and enhancement techniques developed and applied to the route helped to preserve the scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources of the area, while maintaining the mobility and safety of the route's users.

The PIP and CVP process assisted in the development of a cooperative working relationship with the public and boarder stakeholder and ultimately was a key element in the securing environmental approvals for a large and complex undertaking.

## **Organization and Staff Being Nominated:**

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# **Appendix A:**

# **Exhibits**

## Exhibit 1: Proposed Additional Mitigation

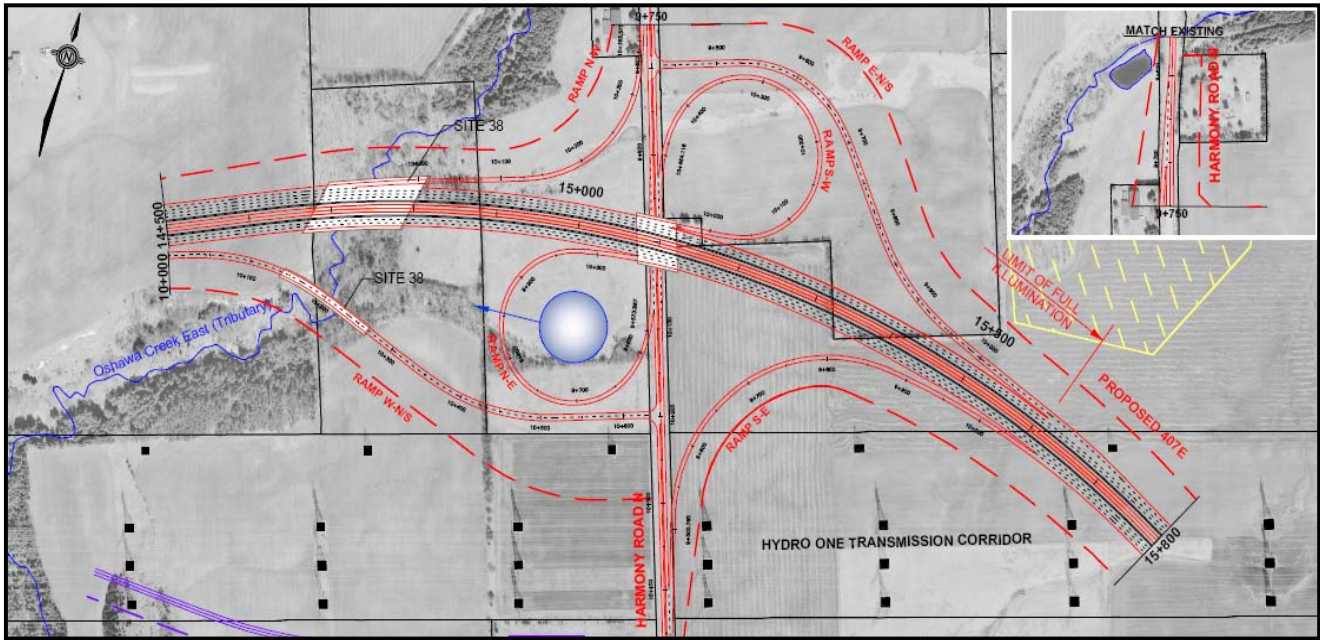


## Exhibit 2: Proposed Bridge Relief Work



## Exhibit 4: Transformation of the Transportation Corridor (Harmony Road Interchange in Oshawa)

### Pre-CVP



### Post-CVP

