Appendix F

Answers to Common Questions and Comments

When will stakeholders know where the new transportation corridor will go?
The project team's preferred route for the GTA West transportation corridor will be presented for review and comment at the second round of Public Information Centres (PIC), which is tentatively scheduled for December 2015. The project team's preferred route will be accompanied by a Focused Analysis Area (FAA), a zone surrounding the preferred route. Properties located within the FAA could be directly impacted by the GTA West transportation corridor, ancillary uses, or if refinements are made to the preferred route during subsequent stages of the study. After reviewing and considering all stakeholder input subsequent to PIC #2, the project team will commence preliminary design of the preferred plan to identify specific property impacts. At the third round of Public Information Centres, tentatively scheduled for the Spring of 2017, the project team will present the preliminary design of the preferred plan.

How many years will it take for the preferred transportation corridor to be constructed?
The study is currently in the planning and preliminary design phase, which represents an early stage of the overall process, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. The planning and preliminary design phase will culminate in an Environmental Assessment (EA) Report, which will be made available for public review. The EA Report will also be reviewed by the Minister of the Environment.

Following the review of the EA Report, and if EA approval is obtained, the corridor will be protected, and the ministry can proceed to the detail design stage. This stage generally involves engineering tasks such as surveying, testing for soil conditions, determining construction material requirements, and developing the design details for the new highway, interchanges, bridges, etc. The detail design phase will take several years to complete, and it is possible that the corridor will be divided into multiple detail design studies.

Currently there is no commitment to a timeline for detail design and construction. The timing and duration of transportation corridor construction depends on numerous factors, including size and complexity of the project, funding availability, and timing of environmental clearances and permits.

What happens if my land is impacted? How will I be compensated?
The property acquisition process will not be initiated until the EA Report is approved and the province allocates funding for the detail design and property acquisition process. In general, property acquisition is intended to be a negotiated settlement that is agreeable to both parties. Compensation is based on providing fair market value for your property at the time that the property is acquired. Fair market value is based on what similar land might be expected to sell for if sold on the open market by a willing seller to a willing buyer. MTO staff will be available at PIC #2 to discuss property concerns.

How is cost incorporated into the evaluation?
Cost is a factor being considered under the Transportation category. As noted in the Summary of Evaluation Factors and Criteria for Alternative Methods (August 2015), we are considering the relative road construction cost, excluding property and engineering design costs. It will be a quantitative construction cost based on a unit cost/km of new transportation corridor.

How are municipal plans and development plans at varying levels of approval incorporated into the evaluation? Is impact assigned for present day or future conditions? How do you account for existing rural areas designated to become urban in the future?
The project team assesses impacts based on what is here today, but we also consider approved development and land use changes. Land use impacts assess existing land use and approved planned future land use.

The relative importance of a factor may change when in an urbanized area or in a rural/natural/agricultural area. Urban areas are areas that are generally built up—residential, commercial, industrial, etc. Rural areas generally include scattered residential, agricultural, conservation lands, and other natural areas. The importance of impacts to existing agricultural lands within the designated urban areas in Brampton needs to be considered differently than the lands in rural Halton Hills or Caledon that have not been designated for development, since within designated urban areas, the agricultural operations are not expected to continue as those areas are developed.

The Reasoned Argument Method, which is the primary approach for the evaluation, allows the project team to qualitatively put as much or as little emphasis on criterion. The project team's database of current and future land use and planning/development applications will serve as the basis for assessing impacts to the criteria related to development and municipal plans.

When you design bridges over watercourses, how do you evaluate where the best crossing is?
We consider all factors when designing bridges, including topography, highway geometry and impacts to the natural environment and land use. For example, longer bridges may have less impact on the valley but may be more costly. We also look at adjacent land use impacts. We look at each crossing alternative in terms of impacts to the natural, land use/socio-economic, cultural, and transportation environments.

Is the project team going to give more emphasis to the input from some stakeholder groups than others?
No. Using the reasoned argument method, the project team will consider and identify key pieces of input from all sources, as appropriate. Using the arithmetic method, input from each stakeholder group will be considered equally. Each evaluation weighting scenario is a sensitivity test on its own that can be compared to the results of the reasoned argument method. The reasoned argument method is the primary tool for selecting the preferred route.

With so many sub-factors under the Land-Use/Socio-Economic Environment Factor, will the weightings for those become diluted and insignificant compared to, for example, the small number of sub-factors of the Cultural Environment Factor?
No. The Reasoned Argument Method is the primary approach for evaluating the alternatives and through that method the project team has the ability in the evaluation to qualitatively give higher significance to sub-factors where appropriate. It is through this method that the preferred route will be identified.

With respect to the arithmetic sensitivity tests, the project team will allocate weightings to each sub-factor within a factor group. This is done based on stakeholder input, secondary source information, results from field investigations, and professional expertise, which allows the relative importance of each sub-factor in its factor group to be reflected in the weighting assigned.

The step-by-step Approach for Evaluating the Short List of Route Alternatives for both the Reasoned Argument and Arithmetic Methods can be downloaded at: http://www.gta-west.com/consultation-pic.html.

How is agriculture being considering in the GTA West Study?

Collection of agricultural Information

The project team has collected information on the existing and future agricultural conditions in the GTA West Study area from a variety of sources, including:

- Provincial Plans (e.g. The Greenbelt Plan, Provincial Policy Statement).
- Municipal Official Land Use Plans and schedules.
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) resource maps, guidelines and data sets.
- Regional and local agricultural federations.
- Aerial photography.
- Review of Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) studies.
- 2014 and 2015 Field investigations.
- GTA West Study Agricultural Operations Survey: the project team further engaged agricultural land owners and users by distributing an Agricultural Operations Survey in June 2015 (available on the project website and distributed through the York Federation of Agriculture, Halton Federation of Agriculture, Peel Federation of Agriculture, Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group, and Ontario Federation of Agriculture).
- Consultation with various agricultural stakeholders, including operators in the study area and agricultural representatives on the GTA West advisory groups (e.g. Regulatory Agency Advisory Group, Community Advisory Group, and Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group).

Information gathered has included:

- Areas slated for future development and areas to remain agricultural in the future.
- Soil capability for agriculture.
- The primary use and size of agricultural properties.
- Additional lands used in each agricultural operation (location, size, use).
- Tile drainage (location, type of system).
- Which roads are used (machinery movement) and frequency of use (daily, seasonal).
- Buildings and structures associated with operations (type, size, age).
- What crops are grown and crop rotation.
- Plans to increase, decrease or maintain the current size of operations.
- Whether operations are certified for organic production.

How agricultural information is being used

During Stage 1 of the study the project team, in consultation with the Greenbelt Transportation Advisory Group (GTAG), drafted the *Guideline for Planning and Design of the GTA West Corridor through the Greenbelt* which includes recommendations of strategies to reduce impacts to sensitive lands, including agricultural areas. Recommendations from the Guideline are being considered and implemented during route planning and preliminary design of the GTA West transportation corridor where impacts to Greenbelt lands cannot be avoided. The Guideline is available for download on the project website at http://www.gta-west.com/reports.html

Agricultural information gathered during Stage 2 has been incorporated into an Agricultural Existing Conditions Map and a Future Land Use map. These maps are regularly updated and are being referenced when assessing and evaluating route and interchange location alternatives.

Agricultural Operations Survey results are being used to fully understand the impacts to agricultural lands, practices and linkages and to help identify what factors should be given emphasis in the evaluation of route and interchange location alternatives. For example, feedback has indicated that it is important to avoid impacts to high investment agricultural operations.

How agriculture is being considered in the evaluation of short listed route and interchange alternatives

The project team is undertaking a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of the short listed route and interchange location alternatives. Impacts to farm lands and farm operations are considered under multiple factors and sub-factors in the Summary of Evaluation Factors and Criteria for Alternative Methods (August 2015), including but not limited to:

- 2.1.2 Provincial / Federal Land Use Planning Policies/Goals/ Objectives and 2.1.3 Municipal (local and regional) Land Use Planning Policies / Goals / Objectives: consider Impacts to agricultural lands
- 2.4.2 Agriculture/Specialty Crop: considers Canada Land Inventory soil classes, specialty crops/cropland, dairy/livestock operations, field crop operations, high investment agricultural operations, and established agricultural farm communities, and specifically considers: property impacts including encroachment, severance, fragmentation of a parcel, and displacement; long-term alteration/disruption; change in area character/aesthetics; nuisance effects; change to access / travel time; change to facilities/utilities/services; and loss of agricultural facility (barns and ancillary buildings).
- 2.2.4 Commercial / Industrial Uses and Properties: agricultural commercial operations are being counted under this sub-factor, as well as being acknowledged under 2.4.2 Agricultural/Specialty Crop.
- Factor 1.3 Ecosystem Services: agricultural lands are included in the assessment of ecosystem services. We recognize and will capture services provided by agricultural lands for non-market values (e.g. recreation, pollination) through this assessment.
- Sub-factor 1.4.5 Groundwater-Dependent Commercial Enterprises: impacts to agricultural operations associated with potential alterations to the availability, quantity or quality of groundwater will be considered.
- Sub-factor 2.2.3 Urban and Rural Residential Uses and Properties: farm residences are included in the count of number of residential dwellings and residential properties directly impacted by each route alternative.

Why agriculture is not a separate factor group

The Reasoned Argument Method is the primary method for evaluating the short listed route alternatives and selecting the preferred route. The Reasoned Argument Method qualitatively compares the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives and allows the project team to provide rationale (or trade-offs) for why one alternative is preferred over another. With the Reasoned Argument Method, we are able to put as much or as little emphasis on a criterion, whether it is its own factor group or whether it is a sub-factor. Therefore, this method will allow the project team to elevate the consideration of agricultural effects where applicable without the need to create a separate high level factor group. Furthermore, in sections with sensitive agricultural features and where agriculture is expected to be the

primary land use in the future, the project team can recognize the importance of these features specifically in the evaluation of that section.

Is the project team considering active transportation?
Elements of active transportation are accounted for in the evaluation under the Transportation Factor in the Summary of Evaluation Factors and Criteria for Alternative Methods (August 2015):

- Sub-factor 4.4.4 Accommodation for pedestrians, cyclists, snowmobiles, and specialized vehicles: considers the potential to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists within critical travel corridors in urbanized areas and snowmobiles in recognized rural trails; and specialized vehicles such as farm equipment in rural agricultural areas

Active transportation will further be considered during the preliminary design stage once the project team knows where the bridge crossings will be and what they will look like. 400-series highways do not allow for cycling corridors within the right-of-way due to safety issues. We are however considering localized active transportation opportunities which coordinate with municipal plans.