



TOWN OF AURORA
ADDITIONAL ITEMS
FOR TRAILS AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday, June 17, 2016
10 a.m.
Council Chambers

- **Delegation (a) Klaus Wehrenberg, Resident** pg. 1
Re: Rail corridor expansion impacts on Aurora's trail system

- **Delegation (b) Klaus Wehrenberg, Resident** pg. 2
Re: Highland Gate



Legal and Legislative Services
905-727-3123
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Town of Aurora
100 John West Way, Box 1000
Aurora, ON L4G 6J1

DELEGATION REQUEST

This Delegation Request form and any written submissions or background information for consideration by either Council or Committees of Council must be submitted to the Clerk's office by the following deadline:

4:30 P.M. ON THE BUSINESS DAY PRIOR TO THE REQUESTED MEETING DATE

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE/ADVISORY COMMITTEE DATE: *TATC JUNE 17, 2016*

SUBJECT: *RAIL CORRIDOR EXPANSION IMPACTS ON AURORA'S TRAIL SYSTEM*

NAME OF SPOKESPERSON: *KLAUS WEHRENBURG*

NAME OF GROUP OR PERSON(S) BEING REPRESENTED (if applicable):
SELF

BRIEF SUMMARY OF ISSUE OR PURPOSE OF DELEGATION:

TO DISCUSS REASONS FOR HAVING TRAILS MASTER PLAN'S GRADE SEPARATED CROSSINGS RESPECTED DURING CURRENT RAIL CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS, AND TO MAKE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATION.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

Have you been in contact with a Town staff or Council member regarding your matter of interest? YES NO

IF YES, WITH WHOM? *JIM TREE* DATE: *JUNE 15, 16*

I acknowledge that the Procedural By-law permits five (5) minutes for Delegations.

Attachment 1 - Correspondence between Metrolinx and K. Wehrenberg

May 11, 2016

Mr. Klaus Wehrenberg

Aurora, ON

Sent via mail and e-mail:

Subject: Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion – Public Meeting #1 Comments Response

Dear Mr. Wehrenberg:

Our sincerest apologies that we have not gotten back to you sooner. This will not happen again.

Thank you for your questions and for your advocacy towards improving active transportation and spearheading a trail network in the Town of Aurora.

For ease of reading, please find our response to your comments below on the Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion (BRCE) project.

- 1. To best sort out the pros and cons, and priorities, of all trail crossings called for in the Aurora Trails Master Plan, it is recommended that there be an inclusion of trail crossings in the System-Wide Grade Separation Analysis which appears to be focused on only road (= motorized traffic) crossings, or there should be a separate analysis for trail crossings, for all of the Barrie corridor.**

There are 54 current road/rail crossing on the GO Barrie rail corridor. Metrolinx is in the process of assessing the existing road/rail crossings as part of an effort, in consultation with municipalities, to determine which, if any, ought to be replaced with an underpass or overpass. No decisions have been made at this time. Road rail crossings are important pieces of shared infrastructure with municipalities.

Although existing and future/planned trail crossings are not included as part of this assessment, as we move forward with the BRCE project and the implementation of Regional Express Rail, Metrolinx will continue to work with the Town of Aurora to determine which crossings can be prioritized as part of this project and which crossings will be addressed at a future date. We have discussed potential trail crossings with the Town of Aurora as part of these efforts.

- 2. Formal recognition of all trail crossing locations, and the enabling form of infrastructure, should be part of the study outcomes, with at least all trail underpasses being constructed as part of the double tracking construction project.**

Metrolinx is familiar with the Aurora Trails Master Plan (dated November 2011) and has met with Town of Aurora staff to discuss the BRCE project, and in particular, existing and future trails. Town staff have noted Council's support to have all trail/pedestrian crossings along the corridor grade separated given the proposed increased service. Metrolinx will continue to work with the Town of Aurora to reach agreement on planning, design and/or construction of this type of infrastructure.

As part of the ongoing Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP), the potential impact of the project on existing and proposed trail routes as illustrated in Figures 4-3 and 4-4 of the aforementioned Plan will be taken into consideration. A key component of the TPAP is the assessment of the Project on a community's social, environmental and economic well-being, which will be captured in the Socio-economic and Land Use Characteristics Report.

- 3. It is recommended that the conditions that will govern later trail crossing implementations be set out now.**

There are many existing trail crossings throughout the entire GO Transit network. Metrolinx is aware of the associated construction costs and safety requirements that are necessary to support any new crossings. In this regard, Metrolinx will work cooperatively with municipalities and other trail owner/operators to discuss crossing needs where the benefits of a trail crossing are warranted.

- 4. All trails related rail crossings will be on property owned or controlled by Metrolinx...It is recommended that the liability issue be dealt with in a transparent manner, during the Environmental Assessment stage, and that Metrolinx carry the necessary insurance.**

Any type of rail crossing, either at grade or grade separated, is shared by the rail corridor owner (Metrolinx) and road/trail owner (usually a municipality).

As noted above, Metrolinx will continue to work cooperatively with municipalities to reach agreement on planning, design and/or construction of this type of infrastructure.

- 5. The construction of trail related infrastructure should be considered as a necessary consequence of double tracking. The double tracking, apart from the many positive effects, carries with it negative cultural and socio-economic consequences that must be mitigated to the highest degree possible, and must be paid for out of the budget of the project.**

Metrolinx will continue to work cooperatively with municipalities to reach agreement on planning, design and/or construction of any possible trail related infrastructure.

The Socio-economic and Land Use Characteristics Study will identify potential socio-economic impacts associated with the Project and recommend applicable mitigation measures to minimize any negative impacts. Part of the preliminary design for the expansion will accommodate and maintain any existing trails connecting to existing GO Stations, where feasible. In some cases, existing trails will be improved accordingly to accommodate the proposed additional tracks.

- 6. Trail usage is a desirable mode of transportation, of human mobility. That is especially so when the stated goal of the Ontario Government to decarbonize transportation, is taken into consideration. Shifting transportation modes to the non-motorized side wherever at all feasible is the best way to achieve such goal, even more so than switching to public transit.**

Metrolinx thanks you for your efforts to promote active transportation to help shift transportation behaviours. We promote active transportation and work collaboratively with local transit providers and municipalities to improve access to GO stations by encouraging cycling, walking, car sharing and local transit connections. As part of the BRCE project, a Traffic Impact Study is being prepared which will identify opportunities for improving active transportation along the Barrie rail corridor.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Georgina Collymore
Senior Advisor, EA Communications and Community Relations
Capital Projects Group

Dec 15, 2015

Re:
Comments,
Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion
Environmental Assessment

Introduction

Relative to the above, I have received coloured hard copies of the display material from the Nov 5 Public Meeting #1, in Newmarket, a meeting which I attended.

My comments will concentrate on how trails meant for non-motorized recreational and commuter traffic should be accommodated in the planning and construction of double tracking the Barrie Rail Corridor.

Planning Context

Aurora's rail corridor was established when Aurora was a village, with farming country around it.

Neither today's heavy road traffic, nor the current emphasis on opportunities to reduce motorized traffic, were foreseen, and hence not embodied in the planning of the original rail corridor.

There were, however, provisions for cattle crossings, via so-called 'cattle crawls', and for waterway crossings, including even smaller streams.

So there are underpasses which are utilizable for foot and bicycle traffic, which have largely been ignored as potential traffic infrastructure assets, to this day. Cattle have disappeared from Aurora's open spaces; waterways remain. So do people who would like to be able to cross rail tracks safely.

During the early days of Metrolinx, studies were carried out, re mobility and traffic infrastructure needs.

The non-motorized traffic, while part of the needs assessment, and most certainly the environmentally most benign mode of traffic, ended up taking a back seat to motorized transit when it came to automobile alternatives. To some degree, bicycle traffic was respected, but only as part of the road infrastructure.

In the more recent past, off-road trail traffic has entered the 'mobility' picture, for commuting purposes, but just barely.

In Aurora, the recognition of trails formally dates back to 1985, when a 'Trails Network Plan' was introduced to Council, and was accepted in principle. The main purposes of that 1985 Plan were to link Aurora's natural environment into the active fabric of life of Aurora; to increase opportunities for walking and cycling trails; and to increase safety for walkers and cyclists, by separating the motorized and non-motorized traffic.

Those purposes and the conceptual trail route map of that Plan were later incorporated into the Official Plan of Aurora. In 2011, Aurora Council adopted an

Aurora Trails Master Plan (ATMP), which was rooted in the 1985 Trails Network Plan.

In the meantime, the Provincial Government has launched major initiatives relative to trails, and to reducing reliance on the automobile, including an Ontario Trails Strategy (2010), and major expansions of transit infrastructure, such as the Barrie Corridor double tracking.

However, a lack of recognition of trails as commuter traffic arteries remains, in spite of such trails representing a very low-cost infrastructure asset from the perspectives of mobility resilience and of public health, and as a facilitator for shifting traffic away from roads.

Trails and the Rail Infrastructure Expansion

The impending widening of the rail corridor offers an opportunity to improve on the trails network of Aurora.

The Trails Master Plan, Aurora's blueprint for where rail track crossings are needed, provides for seven crossings of trails, all off-road.

One of these crossings is where a cattle crawl exists, but has been filled in (NW of end of Ridge Rd W, east of curve of McClellan Way). Another crossing is where a level crossing once did exist, but is currently being blocked with chain link fencing (Cousins Drive). The ATMP calls for a grade separated crossing in this location, along with a tandem underpass across the road that parallels the tracks, Industrial Parkway South. A third grade separated

crossing is marked north of St John's Sideroad, through the stream underpass, to allow a very direct commuter connection to/from Newmarket.

The above three underpasses will require lengthening of the basically existing crossings, to be functional after double tracking has been installed. The other four crossings set out in the ATMP are in various locations, with two of them of grade separated nature. Of those four the one between Wellington St and St John's Sdrd is of highest priority, as no crossings exist in a 1.9 km stretch, and commuting time could be substantially reduced, with a trail crossing in place.

To best sort out the pros and cons, and priorities, of all trail crossings called for in the Aurora Trails Master Plan, it is recommended that there be an inclusion of trail crossings in the System-Wide Grade Separation Analysis which appears to be focused on only road (= motorized traffic) crossings, or there should be a separate analysis for trail crossings, for all of the Barrie corridor.

Formal recognition of all trail crossing locations, and the enabling form of infrastructure, should be part of the study outcomes, with at least all trail underpasses being constructed as part of the double tracking construction project.

In order for off-road trails to become a major component of commuter traffic, the trails infrastructure must be built before any shift to non-

motorized modes can be expected. Such infrastructure must be inviting.

In Aurora, when it comes to trails - off-road foot and bicycle traffic crossing the rail tracks - that has not yet become reality.

As of now, the three basically 2 km stretches of non-crossable rail tracks, between regional roads, divide Aurora to a degree that just about no east-west active transportation is taking place. This is the time to change that scenario, at relatively low cost, with tremendous potential for payoff.

The task at hand, double tracking, will involve track construction that will make it possible to change the current deplorable situation. Now construction costs will be of an incremental nature, as opposed to having to face stand-alone costs. Later, when it will perhaps become politically more expedient or even compelling to provide for trail crossing infrastructure, costs will indeed be of a stand-alone nature, and any construction activity will greatly inconvenience the planned frequent train passages.

Future Rail Crossings

It is recommended that the conditions that will govern later trail crossing implementations be set out now.

That way, not only will it become clear now what is entailed in delaying the relevant infrastructure until later, but the consequences of delays will be very

evident - the hurdles, the inconveniences, and the additional costs that will have to be faced.

Liability

All trails related rail crossings will be on property owned or controlled by Metrolinx.

As far as liability for what happens within the level or grade separated crossings, that will be Metrolinx's. In other words, insurance related to the crossings must be carried by Metrolinx, or whoever operates the tracks.

In the past, there were unresolved disagreements relative to a potential level, controlled crossing at Cousins Drive, for active transportation uses. That scenario resulted in the absolute closing of the crossing, which had been used by non-motorized traffic participants, without incident, for decades.

It is recommended that the liability issue be dealt with in a transparent manner, during the Environmental Assessment stage, and that Metrolinx carry the necessary insurance.

Costs for Trail Crossing Infrastructure

The construction of trail related infrastructure should be considered as a necessary consequence of double tracking. The double tracking, apart from the many positive effects, carries with it negative cultural and socio-

economic consequences that must be mitigated to the highest degree possible, and must be paid for out of the budget of the project.

Trail usage is a desirable mode of transportation, of human mobility. That is especially so when the stated goal of the Ontario Government to decarbonize transportation, is taken into consideration. Shifting transportation modes to the non-motorized side wherever at all feasible, is the best way to achieve such goal, even more so than switching to public transit.

In order to facilitate the shift, the alternate transportation infrastructure must be made very enticing, even enjoyable. A minimal component of enticing infrastructure for commuters is that commuting must be via routes that are as direct as possible, which is what does not exist now, in Aurora.

Moreover, to reach public transit, the provision of a comprehensive trails network could, to some good degree, eliminate the need to commute to transit hubs by car, especially if trails are placed with transit access in mind.

In Aurora, progress has been made in this respect, but much needs to follow. The Trails Master Plan with its long term horizon is a key instrument for achieving such objective. But co-operation from Metrolinx is needed, when it comes to trail infrastructure within the rail corridors.

With wholehearted support from Metrolinx, who have not only been charged with bringing progressive approaches to the table, but have considerable seed

funding as well as technical and administrative capacity at their disposal, Aurora can become an urban mobility model for not only the Greater Toronto Area, but for Ontario. Few other communities in Ontario, if not anywhere, offer such extensive networks of existing and formally planned trails, and of road and rail based transit, to offer anywhere near the opportunity to decarbonize transportation.

This scenario should be considered favourably when it comes to funding any rail corridor related infrastructure for trail crossings. Aurora's Trails Master Plan has laid the groundwork.

It should be noted that in Aurora, in the very near future, commuter trail underpasses under a Regional Road, Leslie Street, are going to be constructed, as part of the widening of the Regional Road. These underpasses will be considered as part of the hard services, in the category of roads.

Funding for the underpasses will be 50 % by the Region, and 50% by Aurora funds (45% out of 'hard' services development charges, and 5% out of 'soft service development charges). The development charges are being paid for by the developers whose future adjacent residential and employment oriented developments are located on the west and east sides of Leslie Street, respectively, and were the reason the underpasses were eventually included in the road widening project – to connect people to jobs.

Inclusion of the underpass construction during the widening of Leslie Street was found to considerably reduce estimated construction costs of such trail

infrastructure, due to only incremental construction costs being incurred.

The principles of trails underpasses representing hard services, and their construction as add-ons during a major road widening project, also hold true for the double tracking project for the Barrie Rail Corridor.

The above sets out my trails related comments which I ask you to respect during the Environmental Assessment stage of the project.

A single track is already a barrier, and dividing the Town. With dual tracks that separation will worsen. Apart from reducing noise complaints (related to whistle blowing at all level crossings), grade separated trail crossings will ensure safe and uninterrupted commuting for the non-motorized cycling and pedestrian traffic, as well as for the rail traffic.

Klaus Wehrenberg [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Aurora, Ont [REDACTED]

PS:

Relevant to my comments:

I have been ongoingly involved in community planning and trails advocacy since the late 60's; have been co-founder of the Oak Ridges Trail Association; and am proud that my one-person NGO achievements have been recognized by having an Aurora trail named after me, in 2005.



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COUNCIL/COMMITTEE/ADVISORY COMMITTEE DATE: *TATC, JUNE 17, 2016*

SUBJECT: *HIGHLAND GATE*

NAME OF SPOKESPERSON: *KLAUS WEHRENBURG*

NAME OF GROUP OR PERSON(S) BEING REPRESENTED (if applicable):
SELF

BRIEF SUMMARY OF ISSUE OR PURPOSE OF DELEGATION:

TO RECOMMEND THAT THE TRAILS COMMITTEE HAVE INPUT INTO TOWN'S POSITION DURING ANY MEDIATION PROCESS, ON HOW TRAILS MASTER PLAN WILL BE RESPECTED

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

Have you been in contact with a Town staff or Council member regarding your matter of interest? YES NO

IF YES, WITH WHOM? *JIM TREE* DATE: *JUNE 15, 16*

I acknowledge that the Procedural By-law permits five (5) minutes for Delegations.