

407 EAST

Environmental Assessment

INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of five newsletters that will be released over the course of the 407 East Environmental Assessment (EA) Study. The newsletters will explain the various stages and activities that will take place during the lifespan of the EA Study, as well as provide a project status update. The newsletters may also contain articles of interest to the public, such as the EA Process included in this newsletter. Each newsletter may also notify you of events and documents that will be available for review. Our Project Team appreciates your interest and we trust that you will find these newsletters to be a valuable information resource as the study proceeds.

BACKGROUND

Planning studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s indicated a need for an east-west transportation corridor north of Toronto, connecting Highway 401 in Milton to Highway 35/115 in Clarington. The central section of Highway 407 was generally constructed in the 1990s. Highway 407 today extends from the QEW/Highway 403 interchange in Burlington to Brock Road in Pickering.

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) EA studies in the early 1990s developed technically preferred routes for the extension of Highway 407 from Brock Road to Clarington, along with north-south links between Highway 407 and Highway 401 in Whitby and Clarington. However, these studies were not submitted to the Minister of Environment for approval and the work was put on hold.

In 2002, MTO commenced an Individual EA Study for 407 East. Under the requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA), an EA Terms of Reference (ToR) was completed as the first step in the preparation of the individual EA. The ToR was approved by the Minister of Environment on January 17, 2005.

The ToR document sets out the proposed work plan for the preparation of the EA Report and provides appropriate commitments to consultation, process and technical requirements during the EA Study, including:

- A plan to address the legislated requirements of the OEAA and Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA);
- A preliminary identification of future transportation problems and opportunities and an outline of the process to establish need by re-examining problems and opportunities during the

Individual EA;

- An outline of the process for determining the Individual EA study area;
- An outline of the process to identify, assess and evaluate alternatives to be considered;
- The consultation plan to be followed during the preparation of the EA; and
- A framework for the preparation and review of the Individual EA.

THE PROJECT

In February 2005, MTO commenced the second phase of the Individual EA Study for 407 East. Notice of the ToR Approval and EA Study Commencement were provided to the public, stakeholders and government agencies in early February 2005. The EA will identify and examine all transportation opportunities, including roads and transit, to address transportation needs in Durham Region and surrounding areas for the next 30 years and beyond. The Study will fulfill all the requirements of the OEAA and the CEAA.

The broad study area identified during the ToR phase is shown below.



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In Ontario, the EA process is governed by the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act (OEAA), RSO 1990. The legislation provides for the protection, conservation, and wise management of Ontario's environment.

The EA process requires extensive consultation with the public, stakeholders and government agencies and applies to most public sector and some private sector undertakings. Public sector projects include public roads and highways, transit facilities, waste management facilities, sewage and water works, electrical generation and transmission facilities, and flood protection works. Although the OEAA does not generally apply to private sector undertakings, Cabinet may pass regulations designating individual projects or general classes of projects as being subject to the OEAA. For example, new or expanded private sector landfills are routinely designated as being subject to the OEAA.

Federal EA requirements will be developed as the study progresses.

Steps of the Provincial Environmental Assessment Process for Individual EA's

- The initiation of the project, otherwise known as the Terms of Reference is prepared to provide a framework for the EA study;
- The Terms of Reference must be completed to be submitted for approval of the Minister of the Environment. An EA is undertaken and when complete, the EA Report is submitted to the Minister of the Environment for review;
- During the Minister's review, all participants are given the opportunity to comment on the process, the documentation and the recommendations;
- The Minister of the Environment will consider all the information provided and publish a Government Review of the EA;
- All participants are given the opportunity to provide comments on the Government Review; and
- The Minister of the Environment must consider the EA, the Government Review, and all comments submitted before deciding to:
 - (a) Approve the EA;
 - (b) Approve with Conditions; or
 - (c) Deny Approval.

The Provincial Environmental Assessment Report will contain:

- A description of the undertaking;
- The purpose of the undertaking;
- Alternatives to the undertaking and their advantages and disadvantages;
- A description of the environment that will be, or may be,

- directly or indirectly affected by the undertaking;
- The expected impacts to the environment as a result of the undertaking;
- The actions necessary to prevent, change, mitigate or remedy any of the impacts upon the environment; and
- Results of consultation regarding the undertaking.

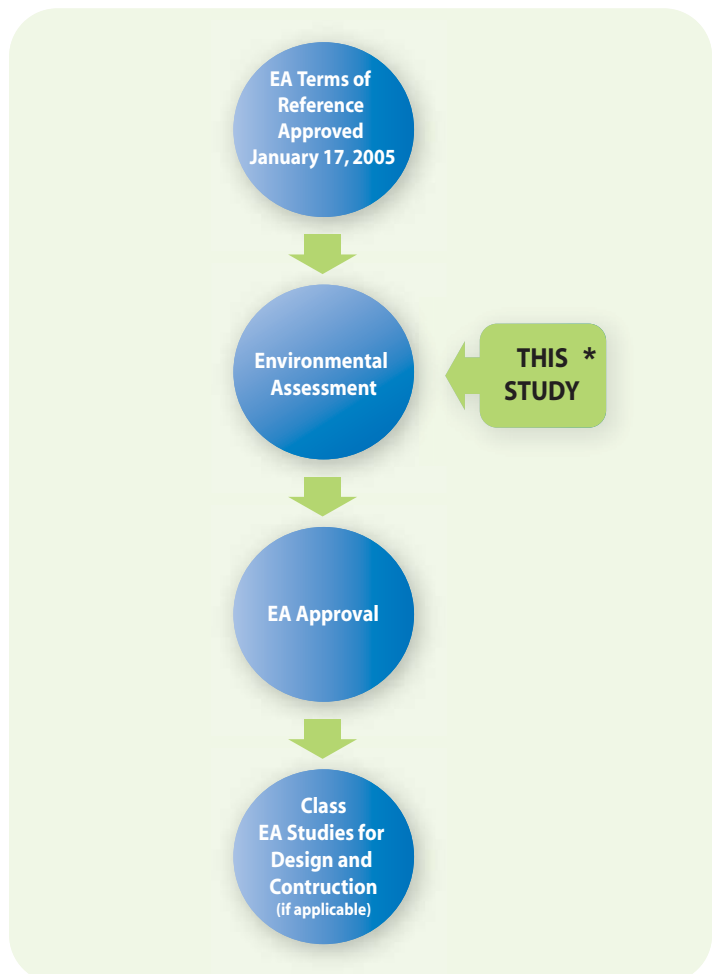
How to get involved in an Environmental Assessment

A key component of the EA process is public consultation. It enables potentially significant issues to be identified early in the decision-making process and allows the proponent to justify any restrictions in the scope of the EA.

Any individual who is interested in the EA, or may be affected by such a proposal, is encouraged to become involved in the process as early as possible.

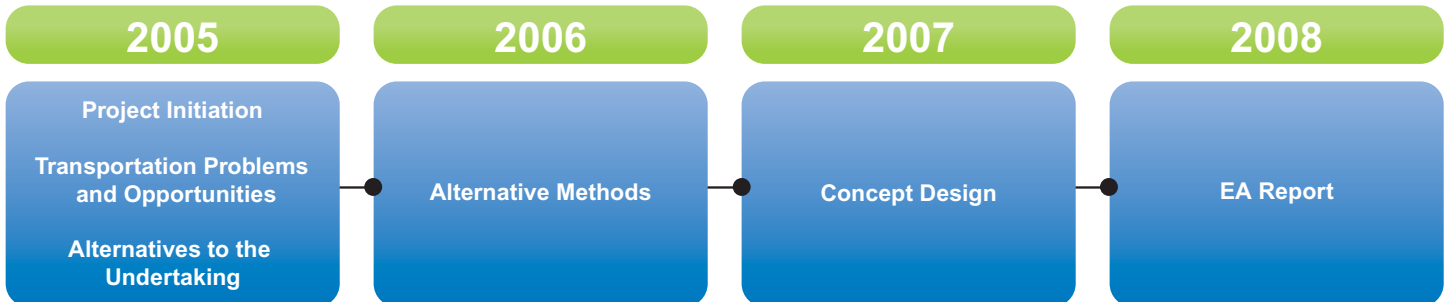
Any person may comment on the 407 East EA by writing to the contacts provided at the end of the newsletter.

The EA process for 407 East is shown in the schematic below.



* STUDY SCHEDULE

The major activities of the 407 East EA and an approximate schedule are:



DEFINITION OF TERMS:

1. Transportation Problems and Opportunities: Transportation problems and opportunities are identified from one or more of the following sources:

- Transportation network plans;
- Inventories of the provincial transportation system;
- Traffic and travel pattern data;
- Projection of future transportation demands and desires based upon planned future conditions, as articulated in provincial policy, Municipal Official Plans, etc.;
- Federal, provincial and municipal agency input;
- Private industry initiatives; and
- Other information sources.

An example of a transportation problem is: A lack of transportation system capacity to serve existing or future travel demands.

An example of a transportation opportunity is: Improving a transportation system can improve safety and remove excess traffic from local neighbourhood roads.

Problems and/or opportunities are articulated in "problem and opportunity statements", providing the basis for identifying a range of reasonable alternative solutions to the undertaking.

2. Alternatives to the Undertaking: Provincial transportation facilities address international, inter-provincial and inter-regional movements of people and goods. Alternatives which may be considered include:

- Do nothing (base case for comparison);
- New and/or improved provincial transportation facilities;
- New and/or improved air, rail transit and water based alternatives;

- New and/or improved municipal and private road alternatives;
- Transportation Demand Management; and
- Optimization of existing transportation infrastructure

3. Alternative Methods: If the preferred alternative to the undertaking is a transportation facility, alternative methods would examine "route location alternatives". Transportation engineering standards, significant environmental features, and environmental impacts are considered in route development, assessment and selection.

4. Concept Design: A Concept Design is prepared for the recommended alternative method (route). The level of engineering design information must be sufficient to support:

- A decision under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on whether adverse environmental effects are significant or not (after mitigation); and
- EA approval under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, unless such approval has already been granted.

A Concept Design for a transportation facility typically includes the following elements:

- Location of the transportation facility
- The types of transportation system connections and supporting associated infrastructure, including, for example:
 - Alignment and cross section;
 - Interchanges;
 - Transitway stations (if known);
 - Grade separation with intersecting railways, highways or roads;
 - Valley and watercourse crossing types;
 - Drainage and stormwater management; and
 - Noise mitigation.

HERITAGE

As part of the land acquisition process for highway construction, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) occasionally has to acquire heritage structures. MTO has purchased some heritage homes in Durham Region based on previous planning studies to extend Highway 407 into Durham Region. These are typically century farmhouses, their associated barns and outbuildings. Most of these structures are leased to tenants and maintained in good order. However, occupancy is not always possible because some of the buildings are in poor repair.

Recently, the Ministry has been involved in two new initiatives designed to save the most vulnerable of these structures. The most significant initiative is the relocation of the structure within the municipality where it is situated. In this programme, houses are offered to the public for a nominal amount through a competitive bidding process. The successful bidder must pay to relocate the house. Five houses have been successfully relocated in the last five years as part of this programme. One of the structures was donated to the Pickering Village Museum and will become part of their new interpretive centre. The relocation programme is a last resort effort to save buildings that might otherwise be demolished or have decayed beyond a repairable state.

The second initiative is a test case for "mothballing" a structure to preserve it for a short period of time (roughly two to five years). Mothballing is a process by which the structure is stabilized and secured against damage from moisture, insects, animals and vandals. This option is being explored as a way to keep buildings in place until such time as the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the 407 East is completed and impacts to the structures can be determined. If the structure is not impacted by the project, the building will be resold for restoration and re-occupation.



PROACTIVE INVOLVEMENT PLAN

A Proactive Involvement Plan has been developed for the EA. It includes enhanced opportunities for early and ongoing consultation with the public, government agencies and stakeholders. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable to changing conditions as the EA process evolves. Public involvement opportunities will include:

- Public Information Centres (PICs);
- Workshops; and
- Neighbourhood/Community Meetings.

The Proactive Involvement Plan will be further explained at the first round of Public Information Centres and on the project website.

Visit our project website for regular updates and notices of events:
www.407eastea.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

The following major activities will be completed prior to the first PIC:

- Identification and assessment of transportation problems and opportunities;
- Review of existing conditions;
- Identification and assessment of alternatives to the undertaking;
- Identification of a Study Area;
- Preparation of EA Work Plans; and
- Preparation for Public Information Centre # 1.

Public Information Centre # 1

A series of four Public Information Centres (PICs) are being planned to coincide with each of the study phases of the EA - as shown in the Study Schedule on page 3. The first PIC, planned for early 2006, will present the draft Transportation Problems and Opportunities, Alternatives to the Undertaking and Preliminary EA Study Area. The format of the meetings will be a "drop-in" style where attendees can view the information panels, ask questions of the Project Team and/or offer formal comments on the comment forms provided.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION OR COMMENT ON THE STUDY?

Your comments and questions are always welcome and can be submitted at any time during the Environmental Assessment process. Your interest in this study is greatly appreciated.

All stakeholders and interested members of the public, who are on our contact mailing list from the Terms of Reference stage, will once again receive a mailed invitation to attend PIC's. If you are new to the area, or know someone who would be interested, please contact the project team through the phone/address at the bottom of the newsletter, and watch for upcoming information.

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Get Involved... Be involved... Stay involved.