CITY OF HAMILTON

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Capital Planning & Implementation Division

Report to: Chair and Members
Public Works
Infrastructure &
Environment

Submitted by: E. (Beth) Goodger
Acting General Manager
Public Works Department

Date: March 16, 2006

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Extension 5101

SUBJECT: York Boulevard Commuter Cycling Class Environmental Assessment (PW06039) - (Ward 1)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the General Manager, Public Works Department, be authorized and directed to file the York Boulevard Commuter Cycling Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report with the City Clerk for a minimum thirty (30) day public review period;

(b) That the General Manager, Public Works Department, be authorized and directed to proceed with the design and implementation of the proposed commuter cycling facilities in the York Boulevard corridor between Dundurn Street North and the City of Burlington boundary, in accordance with Option 2B of the Environmental Assessment, upon completion of the minimum thirty (30) day public review period and subject to fulfilling any other obligations under the Environmental Assessment Act, with funding to be from capital account 4030517124.

(c) That subject to obtaining the necessary Environmental Assessment approvals, the following traffic regulatory changes be implemented in conjunction with implementation of the bike lanes:

(i) designation of reserved, dedicated bicycle lanes on York Boulevard from Dundurn Street North to the border with the City of Burlington, both sides,

(ii) relocation of the transition point for the speed limit change from 50 km/h to 70 km/h to immediately south of the High Level Bridge.

E. (Beth) Goodger
Acting General Manager
Public Works
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City initiated a Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) study in May, 2005, to explore the opportunity of providing commuter cycling facilities in the York Boulevard corridor from Dundurn Street to the Hamilton-Burlington boundary (see map in Appendix A). The purpose of this Class EA study was threefold, to develop a plan for a facility that would: (1) improve the level of safety for commuter cyclists using the York Boulevard corridor, (2) promote the use of cycling as a sustainable alternative means of travel, and (3) preserve sufficient vehicle capacity to avoid significant negative impact on the level of service for motor vehicles.

The following alternatives were examined as part of the Class EA study:

1. Do Nothing
2. On-Road Bike Lane Facilities with the existing four travel lanes
   2A. On-Road Bike Lane Facilities with a partial reduction of travel lanes
   2B. On-Road Bike Lane Facilities with a reduction in travel lanes
3. One Side Bi-directional Off-Road Multi-Use Trail (East Side)
4. Dual-Sided Off-Road Multi-Use Trail

Each alternative was evaluated against a number of natural, social, economic and technical factors. Based on the evaluation, Alternative (2B) On-Road Painted Bike Lanes with a reduction in travel lanes on York Boulevard between Plains Road and the Highway 403 on/off ramps is the preferred option, as it offers the following advantages over the other alternatives:

- serves as a continuous and consistent facility for commuter cyclists, easily accessible for travel in either direction
- provides a buffer between the on-road cycling lane and vehicular travel lanes for one-half of the distance
- has the lowest implementation cost
- requires the least amount of construction activity
- addresses vehicular capacity requirements through the use of four vehicles lanes between Dundurn Street and the Highway 403 ramps, then two lanes between the Highway 403 ramps and Plains Road/Highway 6 where the vehicular volume is reduced by 50%
- leads to an estimated reduction of travel speed in the corridor of approximately 10 km/hr, improving safety for all road users, through a combination of lowering of speed limits, narrowing of lanes and reduction of the number of travel lanes

The total cost for the implementation of this project is approximately $60,000. This project was approved for implementation by Council in 2003 as part of the Commuter Cycling Report; the funds required are available in capital account 4030517124.

The Class EA study follows the planning and design process of the June 2000 Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) Municipal Class EA document for Schedule ‘B’ road projects. Schedule ‘B’ projects include road construction activities that are considered to have a potential for minor impacts. These projects are approved under the Environmental Assessment Act subject to public screening and mitigating measures. The City consulted with relevant review agencies and the general public on this project. All comments received have been addressed and are compiled as part of the project file.
As part of the Municipal Class EA process, the City is prepared to place a project file report on the public record for a minimum 30-day review period. Subject to comments received during the review period, it is recommended that the City proceed with the implementation of Option 2B for the proposed commuter cycling facilities on York Boulevard.

BACKGROUND:
In June, 2003, City Council approved the implementation of on-street reserved bicycle lanes along both sides of York Boulevard, between Dundurn Street North and the City of Burlington boundary near Highway No. 6 and Plains Road. The length of this corridor runs for approximately 3 kilometres, as illustrated on the map in Attachment A. The initial design suggested a possible reduction in travel lane capacity to make room for painted bike lanes along the corridor. Proposals that affect the capacity of a roadway are subject to a Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) process as outlined in the June 2000 Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) Municipal Class EA document. As such, a Class EA study for commuter cycling facilities in the York Boulevard corridor was initiated in May, 2005.

The commuter cycling Class EA follows the Schedule ‘B’ process of the MEA Class EA document. Schedule ‘B’ projects have the potential for some adverse impact that can be mitigated, and require a screening with the affected public and relevant review agencies. The City is near completing the Schedule ‘B’ process and is ready to file the Project File on the public record for a minimum 30 day review period. Subject to responding adequately to comments received during the review period, the City should be in a position to proceed with implementation of the recommendations of the report, which are to create on-street bike lanes, as per Option 2B. The design and implementation of the proposed commuter cycling facilities will be funded from the approved 2005 Capital Budget, Project Identification Number 4030517124, at an estimated total cost of $60,000.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:
This Class EA study explores an opportunity to improve facilities for the commuter cyclist in the York Boulevard corridor from Dundurn Street to the Hamilton-Burlington boundary. The purpose of this project is to (1) Improve the level of safety for commuter cyclists using the York Boulevard corridor, (2) promote the use of cycling as a sustainable alternative means of travel, while (3) preserving sufficient vehicle capacity to avoid significant negative impact on the level of service for motor vehicles. Through the Class EA process, the City was required to, and did consider alternatives approaches and evaluated alternatives with respect to their impact on the economic, social and natural environment. The results of the evaluation led to the preferred alternative and a sustainable plan of action.

The project will require narrower vehicular lanes, with the implementation of reserved bike lanes directly adjacent, from Dundurn Street to the 403 ramps. Due to the new proposed configuration, it is preferred to extend the transition from 50 km/h speed limit to 70, and vice versa at to a point just south of the High Level Bridge. This will act to make cycling more pleasant and attractive in the south portion of the new facility.
Alternative Solutions
The Class EA process requires the municipality to consider all reasonable and feasible options to solve a problem or realize an opportunity. The following alternatives were considered to enhance commuter cycling facilities within the York Boulevard corridor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Solution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1) Do Nothing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The MEA Municipal Class EA requires that the municipality consider the status quo as an alternative solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No improvements to the existing bike route or trail system, neither on nor near York Boulevard.</td>
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| **(2A) On-Road Bike Lane Facilities with the existing four travel lanes** |
| • 1.5 metre painted bike lane in each direction of traffic flow from Dundurn Street to Plains Road. |
| • Crossing area at the Highway 403 on/off ramps designated by visible, painted dashed lines. |
| • Reduced width of curb travel lanes from 3.5 metres to 3.25 metres. |
| • Removal of medians: (1) partial removal of concrete centre median from north of the Highway 403 ramps to Plains Road, (2) removal of painted median from the High Level Bridge to approximately 85 metres north of the entrance to the Hamilton Cemetery, and (3) reshaping of painted median from north of the cemetery entrance to the York Boulevard and Dundurn Street intersection. |
| • Relocation of the transition from 70 km/h to 50 km/h speed limit from the Hamilton Cemetery to immediately north of the High Level Bridge. |
| • Improved pavement markings and signage. |

| **(2B) On-Road Bike Lane Facilities with a reduction of travel lanes** |
| • 1.5 metre painted bike lane in each direction of traffic flow from Dundurn Street to the Highway 403 ramps. |
| • 2 metre painted bike lanes with a 1.5 metre buffer between the bike lane and travel lane from the Highway 403 ramps to Plains Road. |
| • Removal of one travel lane in each direction from north of the Highway 403 ramps to Plains Road: (1) Southbound traffic merges into one lane approximately 350 metres south of the intersection of York Boulevard and Plains Road. |
| • Crossing area at the Highway 403 on/off ramps designated by both parallel painted dashed lines and a perpendicular crossing. |
| • Reduced width of curb travel lanes from 3.5 metres to 3.25 metres. |
| • Relocation of the transition from 70 km/h to 50 km/h speed limit from the Hamilton Cemetery to immediately south of the High Level Bridge. |
| • Removal of medians: (1) removal of painted median from the High Level Bridge to approximately 85 metres north of the entrance to the Hamilton Cemetery, (2) reshaping of painted median from north of the cemetery entrance to the York Boulevard and Dundurn Street intersection (3) reshaping of a small concrete median island in front of the Dundurn Castle entrance (4) possible removal of a short portion of the concrete median on the bridge over the entrance ramp to Highway 403. |
| • Improved pavement markings and signage. |
Alternative Solution

(3) One Side bi-directional Off-Road Multi-Use Trail (East Side)
- 4.0 metre wide sidewalk or off-road trail on the east side of York Boulevard.
- Removal of painted median across the High Level Bridge.
- 3.2 metre wide two-way bike lane on the High Level Bridge with bollards on the east side.
- 1.0 metre wide buffer between the travel lane and gutter from the Highway 403 on-ramp to the Plains Road intersection (delineated by a painted line and reducing lane width in this area).
- Expectation of northbound cyclists to cross York Boulevard when approaching the bridge over Cootes Paradise, to use the 1.5 metre sidewalk on the west side of the bridge, and cross back at the Plains Road and Rock Gardens intersection. There is no sidewalk on the east side of this bridge.

(4) Dual-Sided Off-Road Multi-Use Trail
- 2.5 metre wide asphalt multi-use trail along both sides of York Boulevard throughout the corridor
- 1.0 metre wide buffer between the travel lane and gutter from the Highway 403 on-ramp to the Plains Road intersection (delineated by a painted line and reducing lane width in this area)
- 1.5 metre wide bike lane on both sides of the High Level Bridge
- Removal of the painted median across the High Level Bridge
- Expectation of cyclists to travel on-road at the Highway 403 ramps to get on and off the off-road facilities
- Expectation of northbound cyclists to cross York Boulevard when approaching the bridge over Cootes Paradise, to use the 1.5 metre sidewalk on the west side of the bridge, and cross back at the Plains Road and Rock Gardens intersection. There is no sidewalk on the east side of this bridge.

Evaluation of Alternative Solutions and Preferred Alternative Solution

All alternatives were evaluated against the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>• Impact on Adjacent Vegetation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Environment</td>
<td>• Impact on Adjacent Historical Feature such as the High Level Bridge,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dundurn Castle, City of Hamilton Cemetery, Royal Botanical Gardens</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact on Adjacent Archaeological Features such as the City of Hamilton</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cemetery, Dundurn Castle, and Royal Botanical Gardens</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact on Public / Recreational Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Environment</td>
<td>• Bike Lane Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traffic Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corridor Capacity</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Road User Safety</td>
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</table>
The alternative that best satisfies each of the criteria was selected as the preferred alternative. The Do Nothing alternative would not improve the commuter cycling facilities within the corridor. Alternatives (3) and (4) have both on and off road sections, which do not provide the continuous, uninterrupted flow of travel that is desired by commuter cyclists. These alternatives also mix commuter cyclists with walkers and in-line skaters. Alternatives (2a) and (2b) provide a continuous flow for commuter cyclists. The major difference between these two alternatives is the amount of concrete median to be removed to make room for the on-road bike lanes and maintain a sufficient number of travel lanes.

From a cost perspective, Alternative (2A) will be approximately $260,000 more to implement as a result of having to remove a considerable amount of median that currently exists throughout the corridor.

From a technical perspective, Alternative (2B) is preferred as it provides the greatest amount of separation between the cyclist and the motor vehicle in the higher speed northern half of the facility. In order to avoid the cost of removing concrete medians, Alternative (2B) introduces the reduction of travel lanes north of the Highway 403 ramps from 4 through lanes to 2 through lanes.

Based on the evaluation, Alternative (2B), On-Road Painted Bike Lanes with a reduction in travel lanes on York Boulevard between Plains Road and the Highway 403 on/off ramps is the preferred solution to improve commuter cycling facilities within the York Boulevard corridor.

The mitigation of construction impacts will be applied during implementation:

- Development of a traffic management plan during temporary closures, if required
- Notification to adjacent property owners, Police and Emergency Services
- Maintain access to all properties and businesses along the roadway
- Restrict construction activities to daytime hours
- Adhere to local noise by-laws
- Employ standard dust control measures
- Provide appropriate advance signing for construction activities
ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

The preferred alternative has been identified using an evaluation and screening process that fulfils the requirements of the MEA Municipal Class EA document for Schedule ‘B’ projects. Municipal projects of this category are considered to be approved under the Environmental Assessment Act provided that the project follows the Schedule ‘B’ planning and design process outlined in the MEA Municipal Class EA document. If the City does not follow the process outlined in the Municipal Class EA document, the City would be in violation of the document and as a result would have contravened the EA Act. The Ministry of Environment could revisit the approval of a project or take away the City’s right to use the Municipal Class EA document.

The preferred alternative is not normally reconsidered at the end of the process unless there is an issue that is proven to affect the outcome of the evaluation process. There are two alternatives for Council to consider with respect to the recommendations of this report:

1. To file the York Boulevard Commuter Cycling Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report with the City Clerk for a minimum 30 day public review period and proceed with implementation, subject to comments received.

2. To not file the York Boulevard Commuter Cycling Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report with the City Clerk for a minimum 30 day public review period and, as a consequence, not proceed with implementation.

Should Council not wish to approve the filing of the project file report, the Municipal Class EA process will be considered by the provincial government as incomplete and the City will not have approval under provincial environmental legislation to implement the proposed improvements. The outcome would be equivalent to the doing nothing alternative, which would not fulfill Council’s direction to provide opportunities for sustainable alternative transportation modes within the York Boulevard corridor, and as part of its strategic commitment to achieve a sustainable transportation network throughout the City. Postponing this direction and repeating the Class EA process in the near future would likely result in the same recommendations.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial

The estimated cost to implement the recommendations contained within this report is $60,000. The funds required for full implementation of this project are approved in the 2005 Capital Budget Account, Project Identification Number 4030517124.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications. Design and implementation will be undertaken by the Traffic Engineering and Operations Section, with assistance from the Capital Planning and Implementation Division.

Legal

There are no legal issues affecting this project.
POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

The recommendations of this report support the following Council approved policies and directives:

- Commuter Cycling Initiatives, 2003
- Shifting Gears, 1999
- Downtown Transportation Plan, 2001

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Agency Consultation

The following Departments were contacted for this project:

- Planning and Economic Development (Downtown Renewal, Long Range Planning and Design, Development Planning for Environmentally Significant Areas Impact Evaluation Group, Natural Planning and Heritage Planning).
- Public Works (Opens Space Development, Parks and Cemeteries for Woodland Cemetery, Forestry and Horticulture, Water and Wastewater, Operations and Maintenance, Capital Planning and Implementation).
- Public Health and Community for Cultural Issues and Dundurn National Historic Site.

The following agencies were contacted for this project:

- Bay Area Restoration Council
- Burlington Cycling Committee
- Canada Centre for Inland Waters (Remedial Action Plan)
- Canadian National Railway
- Canadian Pacific Railway
- City of Burlington, Transportation
- Conservation Halton
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Environment Canada
- Hamilton Conservation Authority
- Hamilton Cycling Committee
- Hamilton Health Sciences (Active Community Employees Working Group)
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Transportation
- Municipal Heritage Committee
- Niagara Escarpment Commission
- Ontario Heritage Foundation
- Regional Municipality of Halton (Special Studies, Long Range Planning)
- Restore Cootes
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- The Bruce Trail Association
- Transport Canada Marine
- Utilities (Bell Canada, Cogeco Cable Inc., Enbridge Gas, Hamilton Hydro Inc., Hamilton Utilities Corp., Hydro One, Union Gas Ltd.)
- West Harbour Trail Committee, including the Hamilton Waterfront Trust

All agency comments received have been addressed and are documented in the project file report.
Public Consultation

A Notice of Study Commencement and Public Information Centre was placed in two separate issues of the At Your Service page in the Hamilton Spectator. Additional notices were mailed to residents within the vicinity of the York Boulevard corridor.

A Public Information Centre (PIC) was held during the evening of December 8, 2005, at Sir John A. MacDonald Secondary School in Hamilton to review this project with the public and agencies. Fifty-two (52) people attended the PIC. Twenty-four (24) comment forms were submitted during the PIC and additional comments were received during the Class EA study. All public and agency comments received have been addressed and are documented in the project file report.

Key Public Consultation Comments

The following public and agency comments are deemed to be important, and responses are below:

Comment: On-road bike lane facilities and four travel lanes provides a balance between the need for cycling facilities and roadway capacity requirements (option 2A). Additionally, Halton’s Road Closure Action Plan recognizes Plains Road as an alternate route in the event of an incident on Highway 403.

Reply: The overall capacity constraints in the corridor are at the signalized intersections, specifically at the Plains Road and Dundurn/York intersections. These intersections will not be modified. The proposed reduction in the number of lanes on York Boulevard between Highway 403 ramps and the Burlington border will not affect the corridor’s overall ability to process traffic. During an incident on Highway 403 the capacity of York Boulevard is not governed by the number of through lanes but rather by the single lane capacity at the intersections (i.e. the southbound right turn from York onto Dundurn Street or the northbound left turn from York Boulevard onto Highway 6). As a result, the degrees of congestion will be about the same regardless of whether there are two or four lanes on York Boulevard north of Highway 403. In any case, the relatively small number of incidents that occur on Highway 403 throughout the year should not be the governing factor in the choice of design for York Boulevard.

Comment: Subject to the details and locations of any off-street paths, further [HCA] review may be required at that time.

Reply: It is anticipated that no permits will be required for on-road bike facilities as the subject area is not affected by the Fill, Construction and Alteration to Waterways Regulation, Ontario Regulation 151/90. The City will confirm Hamilton Conservation Authority permit requirements at the time of detailed design.

Comment: The preferred option, Alternative (2B), would be Dundurn Castle’s [National Historic Site] preferred choice. By locating the cycling facility on the existing road eliminates the need for any archaeological work and means that there are no designation implications.

Reply: The City has consulted with the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Municipal Heritage Committee to define alternatives that are feasible and that respect the preservation of natural and cultural heritage features of landscapes and structures located within the study area. As a result of these discussions, the opportunities for road widening to accommodate commuter bike lanes were restricted by limitations to
alter the structural character of the High Level Bridge. This restricted the opportunities to implement Alternatives (3) and (4).

Comment: The Cities of Hamilton and Burlington along with a large group of partners finalized a trail alignment for a multipurpose trail connecting Hamilton and Burlington around the western end of the Harbour.

Reply: Other projects within the study area, namely the Valley Inn Road Bridge Class EA and the Waterfront Harbourfront Trail extension, were considered in the context of this Class EA to determine potential impacts and synergies. The criteria used to evaluate the alternatives considered as one factor, opportunities to connect the commuter bike lane with other trails and recreational facilities.

Notice of Completion

Upon Council approval of the recommendations contained in this report, the City will place a Notice of Study Completion in two separate issues of the At Your Service page of the Hamilton Spectator, announcing the minimum 30 day review period for the Project File Report. The notice will also be mailed to the study mailing list and residents within the vicinity of the York Boulevard corridor.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Opportunities for physical activity are supported and enhanced.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
A sustainable transportation network provides many options for people and goods movement; vehicle-dependency is reduced.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☑ No

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

The Municipal Class EA process ensures that all aspects of the natural, social and economic environments have been considered as part of the evaluation criteria in choosing a preferred alternative and a sustainable plan of action for infrastructure improvements.

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No

The recommendations in this report have no impact on the desired results for this commitment (e.g. life long learning, supportive workplace).