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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is undertaking the Highway 7 & 8 Transportation Corridor Planning and Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) Study, from Greater Stratford to the New Hamburg Area. The purpose of the study is to prepare a long-term strategy to address the identified transportation needs for the Analysis Area and prepare a preliminary design for the provincial roadway components of the recommended plan.

This is the third in a series of newsletters that will be released over the course of the Highway 7 & 8 Transportation Corridor Planning and Class EA Study. During the lifespan of the Planning and Class EA Study, the newsletters will explain where we are in the study process, provide a status update, and describe the activities that are taking place. Each newsletter will also notify you of events and documents that will be available for review. Our study team appreciates your interest and we trust that you will find these newsletters to be a valuable information resource as the study proceeds.

STUDY UPDATE

To-date, two rounds of Public Information Centres (PICs) have been held. All PIC materials and summaries are available on the study website at www.7and8corridorstudy.ca.

At PIC #1, held in July and August 2007, the study process and existing conditions for the Analysis Area were presented. Approximately 115 people attended PIC #1.

At PIC #2, held in June 2008, the identified transportation problems and opportunities were presented along with functionally different ways of addressing the transportation needs in the Analysis Area, including a range of corridor alternatives. Approximately 180 people attended PIC #2. The second round of public consultation also included agricultural drop-in sessions and farm visits through the months of August and September to obtain more detailed information about agricultural operations in the Analysis Area.

The stakeholder input received on information presented at PIC #2 has resulted in revisions to the long list of corridor alternatives and facilitated the development of a short list of corridor alternatives. Further details on the screening process and the resulting short list of corridor alternatives are provided in subsequent sections of this newsletter.

The study team would like to thank all those who attended the PICs and/or provided feedback on the information presented to-date. We look forward to your continued involvement in the study.

SCREENING OF CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES

The long list of corridor alternatives presented in June 2008 was screened to identify a short list of corridor alternatives. The intent was to screen out (remove) corridor alternatives from further consideration which are significantly less desirable than other available alternatives on the basis of the results of applying the screening criteria.

The screening process involved the following three key steps:

- Develop screening criteria
- Apply screening criteria
- Identify short list of corridor alternatives

Nine screening criteria were developed for screening the long list of corridor alternatives. The screening criteria are as follows:

Natural Environmental Factors

- Terrestrial Ecosystems: Minimize loss of PSWs, ANSI, ESAs and core woodlots
- Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems, Surface Water: Minimize number of stream crossings

Land Use and Socio-Economic Factors

- Land Use – Resources: Minimize loss of Canada Land Inventory Class 1,2,3 agricultural land
- Land Use Planning Policies, Goals, Objectives: Minimize loss of approved development lands
- Land Use – Community, Industry: Minimize removal of existing development

Cultural Environmental Factors

- Built Heritage: Minimize loss of heritage buildings
- Cultural Heritage Landscapes: Minimize loss of amenities in heritage downtown areas

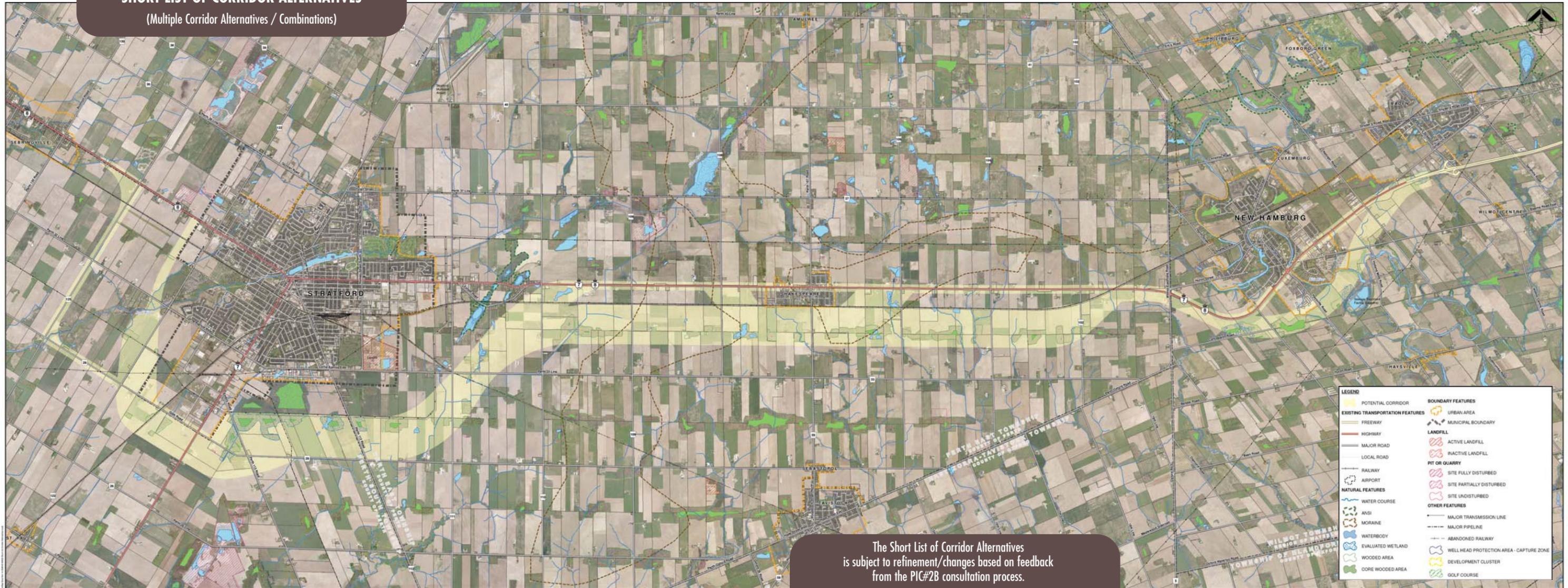
Transportation Factors

- Network Connectivity: Minimize out of way travel
- Mobility & Accessibility: Proximity of corridor to population centres

The results from applying the screening criteria are documented in a series of tables which are available on the study website. The resulting short list of corridor alternatives is illustrated on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

SHORT LIST OF CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES

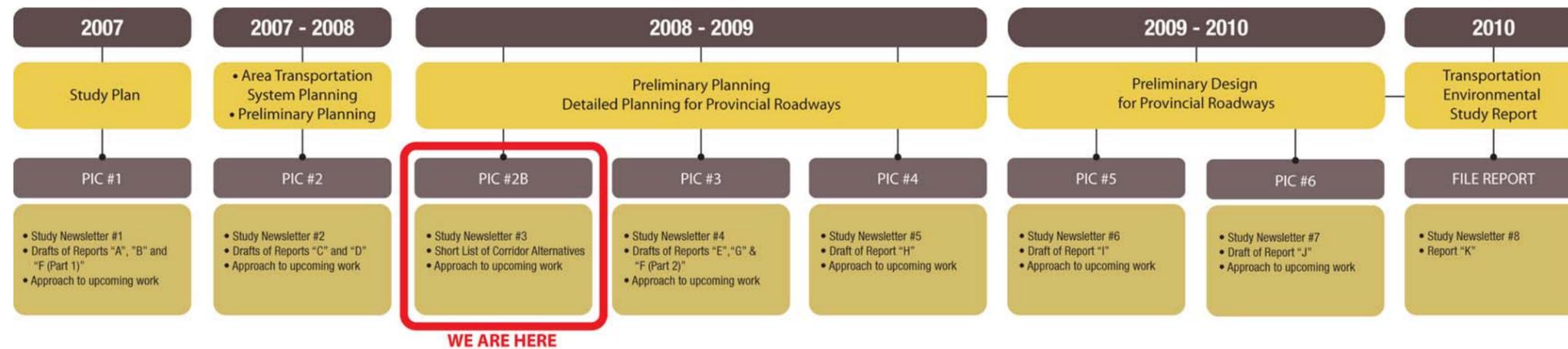
(Multiple Corridor Alternatives / Combinations)



The Short List of Corridor Alternatives is subject to refinement/changes based on feedback from the PIC#2B consultation process.

REVISED STUDY PROCESS

Major study phases, reports and formal points of contact are shown in the following diagram:



ACCESS MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Access management is the systematic control of the location, spacing, design and operation of driveways, median openings (area between opposing directions of travel), interchanges, and street connections to the highway, as well as highway design applications that affect access, such as median treatments and the appropriate separation of traffic signals. The goal of Access Management is to maintain a sustainable provincial highway transportation network by balancing the need to provide efficient, safe, and timely travel with the desired ability to allow access to adjacent development.

The following range of access management alternatives will be considered:

- For Existing Corridors
 - Remove / consolidate existing access points, where feasible
 - Provide service roads where appropriate / feasible
 - Retain some at-grade access points, where appropriate
 - Provide grade separations and interchanges, where appropriate
- For New Corridors
 - Fully controlled access proposed via interchanges
 - Identify locations where cross-highway linkages (grade separations) may be required

There are no pre-determined solutions for access management at this stage in the study process.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION FACTORS, SUB-FACTORS AND CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess and evaluate the short-listed corridor alternatives. Additional information about these criteria can be found in Report A, Supporting Document #5. Your input on the evaluation criteria and their relative importance for the evaluation of corridor alternatives would be appreciated.

Factors/Sub-Factors	Criteria
1. Natural Environmental Factors	
1.1 Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems	1.1.1 Fish Habitat 1.1.2 Fish Community
1.2 Terrestrial Ecosystems	1.2.1 Wildlife 1.2.2 Wetlands 1.2.3 Forests 1.2.4 Vegetation 1.2.5 Designated/Special Areas
1.3 Groundwater	1.3.1 Areas of Groundwater Recharge and Discharge 1.3.2 Groundwater Source Areas and Wellhead Protection Areas 1.3.3 Large Volume Wells 1.3.4 Private Wells 1.3.5 Groundwater-Dependent Commercial Enterprises 1.3.6 Groundwater-Sensitive Ecosystems
1.4 Surface Water	1.4.1 Watershed / Subwatershed Drainage Features/Patterns 1.4.2 Surface Water Quality and Quantity
1.5 Air Quality	1.5.1 Local and Regional Air Quality 1.5.2 Sensitive Receptors to Air Pollutants and Greenhouse Gases
2. Land Use / Socio-Economic Environmental Factors	
2.1 Land Use Planning Policies, Goals, Objectives	2.1.1 First Nations' Land Claims 2.1.2 Provincial / Federal Land Use Planning Policies/Goals/Objectives 2.1.3 Municipal (local and regional) Land Use Planning Policies / Goals / Objectives 2.1.4 Development Objectives of Private Property Owners
2.2 Land Use – Community	2.2.1 Indian Reserves 2.2.2 First Nations' Sacred Grounds 2.2.3 Urban and Rural Residential 2.2.3 Commercial/Industrial 2.2.5 Tourist Areas and Attractions 2.2.6 Community Facilities / Institutions 2.2.7 Municipal Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities
2.3 Noise Sensitive Areas (NSA's)	2.3.1 Highway Noise 2.3.2 Construction Noise
2.4 Land Use - Resources	2.4.1 First Nations' Treaty Rights or Use of Land and Resources for Traditional Purposes 2.4.2 Agriculture 2.4.3 Parks and Recreational Areas 2.4.4 Aggregate and Mineral Resources
2.5 Major Utility Transmission Corridors	
2.6 Contaminated Property and Waste Management	
2.7 Landscape Composition	2.7.1 Scenic Composition 2.7.2 Sensitive Viewer Groups 2.7.3 Scenic Value of Views/Vistas From the Transportation Facility 2.7.4 Specimen Trees
3. Cultural Environmental Factors	
3.1 Cultural Heritage – Built Heritage and Cultural Landscapes	3.1.1 Buildings or "Standing" Sites of Architectural or Heritage Significance, or Ontario Heritage Easement Properties 3.1.2 Heritage Bridges 3.1.3 Areas of Historic 19 th Century Settlement 3.1.4 Cultural Heritage Landscapes 3.1.5 First Nations' Burial Sites 3.1.6 Cemeteries
3.2 Cultural Heritage – Archaeology	3.2.1 Pre-Historic and Historic First Nations' Archaeological Sites 3.2.2 Historic Euro-Canadian Archaeological Sites
4. Area Economy Factors	
4.1 First Nations' Industry	
4.2 Heavy Industry and Trade	
4.3 Tourism and Recreation Industry	
4.4 Agriculture Industry	
5. Transportation Factors	
5.1 Federal/Provincial/Municipal transportation planning policies/goals/objectives	
5.2 Efficient movement of people	
5.3 Efficient movement of goods	
5.4 System reliability / redundancy	
5.5 Safety	
5.6 Modal integration, balance and efficiency	
5.7 Linkages to population and employment centres	
5.8 Recreation and tourism travel	
5.9 Accommodation for pedestrians, cyclists and snowmobiles	
5.10 Constructability	
5.11 Construction cost (excludes property costs and engineering costs)	
5.12 Traffic Operations	

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS

The following material will be available at PIC #2B in draft in order to obtain feedback and comments from stakeholders:

- Revised Long List of Corridor Alternatives
- Screening process and criteria used to generate Short List of Corridor Alternatives
- Short List of Corridor Alternatives
- Process and criteria to be used for the assessment and evaluation of the short-listed corridor alternatives and selection of the preferred corridor
- Process for generating detailed planning alternatives

The PICs provide the first opportunity to review and comment on this material. Your input is requested by **February 6, 2009** so the material can be finalized.

NEXT STEPS

Following the 60-day period provided for stakeholders to review and comment on the material presented at PIC #2B, the study team will:

- Conduct stakeholder workshops (winter 2009)
- Review and respond to all comments received through the consultation process for PIC #2B
- Finalize the short list of corridor alternatives
- Undertake the assessment and evaluation of the short-listed corridor alternatives and select preferred corridor
- Develop / refine detailed planning alternatives for the preferred corridor (i.e. route alternatives for new corridor alternatives; access management/cross-section alternatives for existing corridor alternatives)
- Commence public consultation process for PIC#3 (tentatively scheduled for Spring 2009)

WORKSHOPS

The study team will be conducting workshops in the new year if there is sufficient stakeholder interest. The dates, times and locations of the workshops will be determined early in 2009. Potential subject matter includes: short-listed corridor alternatives; assessment and evaluation criteria for selecting a preferred corridor; and other issues identified by stakeholders.

If you are interested in participating in a workshop, please contact the study team at the contact information below. Please note that workshop participants may be selected to ensure a representative cross section of geographic interests and community perspectives.

STUDY CONTACTS

Your comments and questions are always welcome and can be submitted at any time during the Class EA process. To have your name added to the study mailing list, please contact:

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AND NOTICES OF EVENTS www.7and8corridorstudy.ca

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