



Administrative Report

Office of the Director of Infrastructure Services

To: Warden McNamara and Members of County Council

**From: Jane Mustac, P. Eng.
Director of Infrastructure Services/County Engineer**

Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Subject: Road Rationalization Status Report

Report #: 2019-0417-IS-R011-JM

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide County Council information on the status and next steps pertaining to the undertaking of a Road Rationalization Study for the County of Essex.

Background

The scope of this study is to identify a County Road Network founded on the principles and recommended network adopted in the Essex Windsor Regional Transportation Master Plan (EWRTMP). The EWRTMP recommended a county road system, formed by urban and rural roads that by themselves or in combination with other roads provide inter-regional connectivity within the planning area and to adjacent municipalities.

The study will also determine the appropriate functional road classification network according to the function that they serve, and address growth related deficiencies and improvement needs based on future road needs.

The road rationalization process is expected to be undertaken in phases, each building upon the concepts and directions established in the prior phase.

Phase 1 - Technical Review. Prior to undertaking the road rationalization assessment, a set of foundation principles/criteria are to be established that define the objectives of the County Road Network

Phase 2 - Identification of jurisdictional options and requirements

Phase 3 - Implementation Action Plan

Included in the 2019 Infrastructure Services approved budget is a project to undertake an update to the Essex Windsor Regional Transportation Master Plan (EWRTMP) adopted by County Council in 2005. It is recognized that a review of the County Road Network and its current designations will form a foundation component of the Master Plan update. The update is a comprehensive and collaborative process that is anticipated to be a lengthy undertaking.

The County Road Network Review was extracted from the scope of work for the Transportation Master Plan update and is being undertaken through this study as a stand-alone project. In this manner the core issues surrounding jurisdiction and responsibilities can be addressed more expeditiously. The Transportation Master Plan update would commence once the County Road Network Review is advanced to a point where appropriate philosophies and technical criteria have been finalized.

Discussion

The recommended road rationalization framework was developed based on the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) road rationalization framework as a starting point, and incorporates findings from a review of road rationalization processes in peer counties, policy reviews and input from the Project Team that is comprised of representatives from the County of Essex, each of the lower tier municipalities, the City of Windsor and the Municipality of Chatham Kent. There are four steps to the road rationalization process:

1. Clarify roads under consideration
2. Determine the Basic County Road Network
3. Determine the Complete County Road Network based on other principle based criteria; and
4. Review the County Connecting Link programs.

The road rationalization process is supported by a set of criteria that describe the role and function of the road within the context of the overall network, growth management and support for economic growth in the County. The draft criteria were shared with the Project Team to obtain comments and suggestions and based on the input received, refinements were made to the criteria and weighting. Approximately ten (10) project meetings were arranged and the following tasks have been completed:

- Determine appropriate road rationalization criteria
- Establish an appropriate weighting system for each criteria
- Determine a threshold weight for inclusion/exclusion in the County Road Network
- Identify a draft recommended County Road Network

Current Status and Next Steps

As work progressed and following further discussions with the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), the topic of discussion around County Connecting Links emerged. County Connecting Links have their origin within the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. These sections are essentially those portions of roads within pre-amalgamation Town limits that are not part of the County Road Network but function as extensions of, or connect roads in the County Road Network. These sections are owned by and are under the jurisdiction of the local municipality and the County has entered into a maintenance agreement to provide limited and focused services on behalf of the local municipality. The philosophy behind the cost sharing is that a certain amount of the traffic utilizing the Connecting Link is regional in nature and the County should therefore assume some responsibility for the maintenance of the pavement. Under the County Connecting Link agreements the County is responsible for specific and limited maintenance activities base on a 7.0m pavement wide representing two through travel lanes.

The technical evaluations of road segments identified through discussions have resulted in a list of roads for potential transfer. The project team have expressed an interest in pursuing other jurisdictions to complete a jurisdictional review of nine peer Counties/Regions to gain a better understanding of existing planning practices regarding upper-tier roads through urban and rural areas. The current practices of peer municipalities will be evaluated to determine their applicability to the County of Essex.

Additional project meetings and further analysis on new local roads brought forward for consideration also contribute to additional work/scope change as identified in the Consultant report (Appendix A). The study has far exceeded completion within the original aggressive timeline of ten (10) months.

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However, this additional work is considered necessary to provide local administration and County Council sufficient information to make informed decisions. This additional scope of work is critical to ensure open and transparent dialogue with the Project Team results in collaboration on evaluation criteria that respects the various and unique characteristics of some road segments and a mutual understanding of concerns in specific situations. The revised timeline to complete the project is anticipated to take another 10 months to complete, or January 2020.

Road Rationalization is a complex and critical undertaking that could result in substantially new and/or changed responsibilities, financial and otherwise, for the County. It should be recognized that several factors must be considered in respect to any transfer, including:

- Present and/or depreciated asset value;
- Current and future operating and maintenance costs;
- Future rehabilitation, expansion or replacement costs;
- The capacity to undertake work on any transferred roads;
- Known or expected commitments, liabilities and risks;
- Alignment of development charge by-laws;
- Social, economic and other impacts associated with a loss or gain of jurisdictional, planning and functional control (This is especially critical in the urban areas. For instance, the Towns permit certain urban design features on its roads but the County does not. In other instances, the Town might want to be in control of urban design improvements on roads in the Urban Areas); and
- Implication for government grants, if any.

It is also recognized that the timing of potential transfers could be influenced by resourcing implications. The allocation of staff, equipment and funding are all considerations that may impact the timing of a transfer. A phased in approach that allows for funding and resources to be appropriated allocated will be explored in Phase 2 of the study.

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Anticipated Schedule

Task	Schedule Date
Jurisdictional Review of Planning Practices	May-June, 2019
Examine recommendations and determine transfer requirements	June-August, 2019
Summary of Recommendations – CAO review	September, 2019
Support for Recommendations – County Council	October, 2019
Implementation Methodology and Action Plan Development	November-December, 2019
Final Road Rationalization Report – County Council	January, 2020

The schedule will be continuously reviewed and revised as required.

Financial Implications

The costs to complete the additional work required to complete the road rationalization is estimated to be approximately \$70,000 plus H.S.T. The additional funds can be supported through the Capacity Program.

Recommendation

That County Council support the continued process and additional costs associated with the Road Rationalization Study.

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Respectfully Submitted

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Concurred With,

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Appendix No.	Title of Appendix
A	Consultant Report Next Steps