



## **Administrative Report**

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** Allan Botham, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services

**Date:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025

**Subject:** Road Rationalization Update

**Report #:** 2025-0917-IPS-R20-AB

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide County Council with an update on the ongoing Road Rationalization Study (the "Study"), including key deliverables, the project timeline, and progress to date.

### **Background**

County Council recently endorsed proceeding with the Road Rationalization Study. This initiative follows previous, unsuccessful attempts and reflects renewed engagement and collaboration between County Administration and Local Municipal Partners (LMP). A review of lessons learned led to a recommendation that a successful study should:

- Align with the County's updated Transportation Master Plan (TMP);
- Respect the policies outlined in the County Official Plan (OP);
- Define responsibilities and financial roles;
- Promote fairness among local municipalities; and
- Include meaningful consultation with Local Municipal Partners.

With these principles as a foundation, County Administration began consultations with LMPs in February of 2025. Communication and engagement have been ongoing since that time.

The County is advancing the TMP in collaboration with R.J. Burnside & Associates (Burnside), who are also supporting the Road Rationalization Study. The updated County OP, adopted by County Council on November 6, 2024, is now approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Both

the TMP and OP, along with their background studies, are being used to inform the Rationalization Study.

## Discussion

Based on LMP consultations and feedback to date, Administration shares the majority view that the current County Road network is generally appropriate for the context of Essex County. Therefore, the rationalization process is expected to focus on:

- Establishing an appropriately robust and transparent matrix of decision criteria against which to evaluate the region's road segments today and into the future;
- Retaining and modernizing the County Connecting Link (CCL) model, including updated agreement terms; and
- Confirming jurisdictional, operational and funding responsibilities.

The Study is assessing the existing County road network and other regional routes through a structured and consultative process. Key deliverables, a project timeline, and completed activities are summarized below.

### Key Deliverables

Generally, a road rationalization process would confirm or determine a County Road network that continues to support the vitality of Essex County, and the Council approved level of service.

#### 1. Draft County Road Network

The first major deliverable is the development of a draft County Road Network. Following best practices in Ontario, the process includes establishing rationalization criteria to guide network development. County Administration has proposed a **hybrid model** that applies eight measurable, quantitative criteria (outlined in Appendix I), followed by a qualitative review to incorporate local knowledge and pragmatic considerations. Appendix II illustrates the collaborative process County and LMP Administration engaged in to achieve the various project deliverables.

#### 2. Terms and Conditions for Road Transfers

The Study will develop a framework for road transfers that considers:

- Immediate and long-term costs for maintenance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (Appendix III offer background data on maintenance and rehabilitation costs);
- Expected condition of assets at the time of transfer;

- Timing and phasing of any jurisdictional changes;
- Transfer of any associated dedicated funding (e.g., development charges); and
- Impacts to municipal Asset Management Plans.

### 3. Rationalization Framework

The rationalization criteria and transfer terms will form a guideline for future jurisdictional changes to the County Road Network, providing consistency and transparency.

### 4. Modernized County Connecting Link (CCL) Agreement Template

The current CCL agreement, referenced in By-laws 69-2007 (Amherstburg), 70-2007 (Essex), 71-2007 (Kingsville), 72-2007 (Lakeshore), 73-2007 (LaSalle), 2024-24 (Leamington), and 45-2008 (Tecumseh), lacks clarity in some areas and is inconsistently applied across LMPs. For example, while bridge and culvert cost-sharing are clearly outlined, maintenance cost-sharing is vague. The revised template will address:

- Reconstruction cost responsibilities;
- Rights and obligations regarding changes to service levels; and
- A uniform and modern agreement structure across municipalities.

Following Council approval, the County will work with each LMP to update the CCL agreements, including associated tables and maps.

### Timeline

Table 1 offers a timeline to successfully complete a Rationalization Study in time for Council to consider any additional consultant needs for the 2026 Budget. A final report with a recommended road network and connecting link agreement template will be before County Council toward the end of February 2026.

**Table 1**

Step	Description	Timeline
1	Develop rationalization criteria and a draft road network	In progress – Draft network September 2025
2	Discuss updated CCL template, financial considerations, and terms for transfer	September–November 2025 (in advance of 2026 Budget discussions)

<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
3	Finalize recommendations and implementation plan	Final report to County Council February 2026

### **Progress to Date**

Step 1 is currently underway. County Administration has met individually and collectively with representatives from all Local Municipal Partners. Using input gathered during these meetings, Administration worked with Burnside to develop the quantitative criteria and introduce the proposed hybrid model.

At a collective meeting of the region’s infrastructure leadership on **May 28, 2025**, hosted by the County and Burnside, the following items were reviewed:

- Quantitative rationalization criteria and associated weighting (Appendix I);
- Proposed qualitative criteria/considerations;
- Decision matrix results using only quantitative data (shown graphically in Appendix IV);
- Results from a hybrid approach combining both data and practical considerations (shown graphically in Appendix V).

The **Hybrid Rationalization Model** presented is defined as:

- a) a weighted decision matrix (Appendix I) and
- b) qualitative considerations related to:
  - A) developing/maintaining a grid-like road network;
  - B) improving regional network efficiency;
  - C) distributing traffic more evenly, and
  - D) logical coherence (“does it make sense?”).

The hybrid model received broad support from County Administration and most LMPs, with an emphasis on transparency, updated datasets, and follow-up meetings.

In the weeks following the May 28 meeting, additional feedback was gathered to further refine the hybrid model. An update meeting with the Region’s CAOs occurred on June 10<sup>th</sup> to provide an update on work

completed to date and explain the proposed timeline for the balance of the project.

Table 2 presents the roads possibly affected following application of the hybrid approach, and is depicted on Appendix V.

**Table 2**

<b>Road</b>	<b>Segment</b>	<b>Comment</b>
CR 2 <sup>(1)</sup>	CR 21 to City of Windsor	Remove Connecting Link Status Transfer to Tecumseh
CR 2	CR 21 – Pike Creek	Transfer to Tecumseh
CR 2	Pike Creek – CR 22	Transfer to Lakeshore
CR 5 <sup>(2)</sup>	CR 18 – Alma St.	Remove Connecting Link Status Transfer to Amherstburg
CR 5	CR 10 – ETR	Transfer to Amherstburg
CR 16 <sup>(3)</sup>	CR 20 – CR 5	Remove Connecting Link Status Transfer to Amherstburg
CR 17	CR 46 – Hwy 401	Transfer to Tecumseh
CR 34	CR 19 – Hwy 3	Transfer to Tecumseh
CR 39	CR 2 – Lake St. Clair	Transfer to Lakeshore
CR 48 <sup>(4)</sup>	CR 34 – Erie Street	Remove Connecting Link Status Transfer to Leamington
Patillo Road	CR 22 – CR 42	Transfer to County
Laurier Parkway	CR 20 – CR 9	Designate Connecting Link

Note:

- (1) Tecumseh Road in the Town of Tecumseh is owned and managed by the Town and is currently designated as a Connecting Link of County Road 2.
- (2) This segment of Meloche Road in the Town of Amherstburg is owned and managed by the Town and is currently designated as a Connecting Link of County Road 5.
- (3) This segment of Alma Street in the Town of Amherstburg is owned and managed by the Town and is currently designated as a Connecting Link of County Road 16.
- (4) This segment of Oak Street in the Municipality of Leamington is owned and managed by the Municipality and is currently designated as a Connecting Link of County Road 48.

### **Next Steps**

- Complete Step 1 with refined hybrid model and draft road network. A short list of outstanding road segments will be further discussed and recommendations will form part of the next presentation to County Council (Appendix VI).
- Proceed with Step 2: Develop and consult on updated CCL agreement, terms of transfer, and financial considerations.
- Present an update report to County Council on Step 2 progress in November 2025, ahead of the 2026 Budget deliberation process.
- Continue regular engagement with LMPs and present the draft final report to County Council in February 2026.
- If County Council support is not received in November, the project would be paused until after 2026 Budget deliberations and an external consultant is retained.

### **Financial Implications**

At this stage, there are no direct financial implications associated with Council's approval of Step 1, as outlined in the recommendation. This report is intended to provide an update on the study's progress and seek Council's support to proceed to Step 2. Moving into Step 2 won't create any financial commitments for the County or our Local Municipal Partners. Instead, this next phase is focused on developing the financial framework, things like estimated costs for road maintenance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, the condition of assets at the time of transfer, any funding offsets (such as

development charges), how transfers would affect asset management plans, and the timing of potential jurisdictional changes.

All of this will be developed in consultation with our local partners and brought back to Council in an update planned for November 2025. That report will provide the details needed to understand the financial impact ahead of the 2026 budget process.

At that point, Council would be asked to consider and approve any financial commitments. This phased approach is designed to maintain project transparency and give Council the chance to fully understand the financial picture before any decisions are made about implementation.

**Consultations**

This report was prepared in consultation with Directors of Infrastructure and Corporate Leaders of our Local Municipal Partners.

**Strategic Plan Alignment**

<b>Working as Team Essex County</b>	<b>Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence</b>	<b>Building a Regional Powerhouse</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation</li> </ul>

**Recommendation**

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0917-IPS-R20-AB, Road Rationalization Update as information, approve the Hybrid Rationalization Model, support the finalization of the County Road Network

with LMPs and direct Administration to continue to Step 2 of the Road Rationalization Study Timeline.

## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*Allan Botham*

Allan Botham, P.Eng., Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services

Concurred With,

*Sandra Zwiers*

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Title</b>
I	Road Rationalization Criteria
II	Flow Chart
III	Road Maintenance Costs
IV	Map Results of Quantitative Decision Matrix
V	Map Results of Hybrid Model
VI	Outstanding Segments