

Ministry of Transportation
Office of the Regional Director
West Region

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May 4, 2018

M2018-1521

Mr. Tom Bain
Essex County Warden
County of Essex
360 Fairview Avenue West
Suite #314
Essex ON N8M 1Y6

Dear Mr. Bain:

Thank you for your follow up letter to the Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Transportation regarding your discussions at OGRA and for providing additional information about industry growth in Essex County. I appreciate the opportunity to respond on behalf of the minister.

Following our meeting at OGRA in February, staff have reviewed both traffic volumes and safety on Highway 3. Traffic growth on Highway 3 has generally been below two percent per year, over the past 10 years. The traffic volumes in this section of Highway 3 are below the estimated forecast for 2017 in the Preliminary Design and Environmental Assessment Study completed in 2006. The overall collision rate for Highway 3 remains below the provincial average.

To ensure that our traffic forecasting takes into account the latest information, the ministry is currently undertaking the development of a province-wide passenger and freight travel demand forecasting model. The model will provide MTO with a new tool for forecasting and analysis that will take into account the expected industry growth in this area. The model is currently in the testing and validation phase and is expected to be ready for use later this year. It would be helpful to have more details and evidence of commercial growth in the agri-industry in Essex County so we can consider this appropriately to run traffic modelling and priority setting. Such information has the potential to influence provincial priorities.

Ontario remains committed to finishing our plans to widen Highway 3 between Windsor and Leamington to four lanes. The project from Essex to just west of Leamington is listed in the 2017-2021 Southern Highways Program under Planning for the Future.

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Funding will be considered in the context of other provincial infrastructure investment priorities, and the noted growth and innovations in the agri-industry would be a factor that could influence program priorities.

In the meantime, we are continuing engineering work through the Town of Essex. The updated preliminary design for Highway 3 through the Town of Essex received environmental clearance in January 2017. The work currently underway for this project includes finalizing the alignment, assessing environmental impacts, identifying utility conflicts and determining structural, geotechnical, grading and drainage requirements, through the Town of Essex.

The ministry is working to initiate a design assignment to update the Preliminary Design and Environmental Assessment Study completed in 2006 and complete the design for the section from Essex Road 23 to 1.1 km east of Essex County Road 34. The ministry is also working on determining property requirements through this section which will enable us to initiate property acquisition.

The ministry also plans to do work on Highway 3 from Essex Road 34 to Highway 77 in Leamington. As shown in the 2017-2021 Southern Highways Program, construction would begin between 2019 and 2021. This work would include resurfacing the highway and does not include widening the highway.

I encourage you to continue the dialogue with staff in our West Region office, so we can better understand these changes to the industry and the impact it will have on commercial traffic in the area. Please contact Michael Nadeau, Manager of Engineering, at 519-873-4373 or Michael.Nadeau@ontario.ca if you would like to discuss this project in more detail.

The ministry takes public safety very seriously. Maintaining and improving safety on provincial highways is our number one priority. Ministry staff will continue to work with the County and all stakeholders as we continue to move this important project forward.

Sincerely,



Neil Zohorsky, P.Eng.
Regional Director
West Region

c: Mayor Aldo DiCarlo, Town of Amherstburg
Mayor Ron McDermott, Town of Essex

Mayor Nelson Santos, Town of Kingsville
Mayor Ken Antaya, Town of LaSalle
Mayor John Paterson, Municipality of Leamington
Mayor Gary McNamara, Town of Tecumseh
Taras Natyshak, MPP, Essex
Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex