

Study proposes options other than a super highway

June 25, 2010

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It appears the much-vaunted idea of building a super highway between Fort Erie and Burlington is dead.

The group studying transportation schemes between Niagara and the GTA has outlined preferred options and they do not include the super highway.

However, it does say in its latest report that a new highway corridor between west Niagara and Stoney Creek-Hamilton "in the long term ... will help to alleviate future congestion on QEW and provide (road) network flexibility." It implies this might be beyond 2031.

The options proposed are a new highway corridor connecting the QEW in Fort Erie/Niagara Falls with Highway 406 in Welland; widening of the QEW between Highway 406 in St. Catharines and the Freeman Interchange (QEW-403-407) in Burlington; operational improvements on Highway 403 between the Ancaster-Brant County border and the Freeman Interchange in the short term; and a new corridor study to connect Highway 403 at Ancaster-Brant with Highway 407 near the Burlington-Milton border.

The options were presented at Public Information Centres held over the past week in Ancaster, Burlington and Welland. It was the fourth open house held by the Niagara-GTA study team since the idea of the

super highway was put under the scrutiny of an environmental assessment by the Liberal government in 2005.

The team also recommended exploring Hamilton as the centre for an inter-regional transit service involving Niagara, Brantford, Burlington, Guelph and Kitchener- Waterloo. This would hark back to when Hamilton was the centre of numerous streetcar lines in the early part of the 20th century.

The draft transportation development strategy, which considered community, economic, environment and transportation impacts of the preferred options, will be finalized by the end of the year with input from the last information centre. It will then undergo a review by the Ministry of Transportation and other agencies.

Under the former Conservative government, a 2001 study determined the need for a new highway and premier Mike Harris announced plans to build a \$1.5-billion highway between the QEW in Fort Erie and Highway 407 in Burlington.

The mid-peninsula corridor was supported by Hamilton, Niagara Region, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and the Niagara Economic Development Corp. It was opposed by Burlington and Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment because it threatened the Niagara Escarpment.

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