



Regional Municipality of York

# Keele Street

Class Environmental Assessment  
from to Rutherford Road to Steeles Avenue

## PUBLIC MEETING FEEDBACK REPORT

May 4, 2011 Public Consultation Centre  
On the Preferred Plan

This report has been prepared by an independent facilitator. It is not intended as a verbatim account and is provided here as a record of the input.

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# **Keele Street Class EA (Steeles Avenue to Rutherford Road) Public Meeting Feedback Report May 4, 2011**

## **1. Context for the Keele Street Class EA (Steeles Avenue to Rutherford Road)**

The Regional Municipality of York is carrying out a Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) study to determine existing and future road needs and improvements on Keele Street (Y.R. 6) from Steeles Avenue West to Rutherford Road (Y.R.73) in the City of Vaughan. The south boundary of the study area has been revised to Steeles Avenue West from York Boulevard. The study is being conducted in accordance with the "Schedule C" requirements of the Municipal Engineers Association Class Environmental Assessment (June 2000 as amended in 2007), which is approved under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act. The Class EA process includes public and review agency consultation, assessment of ways of solving the problem, assessment of the potential effects on the social and natural environment(s), and identification of reasonable measures to mitigate potential adverse effects.

The Regional Municipality of York held a public consultation centre for the Keele Street Class Environmental Assessment Study (from Steeles Avenue to Rutherford Road) on Wednesday, May 4, 2011 at Fontana Gardens. The meeting was held in two parts, the first being an open house from 5 to 7 p.m. followed by a presentation by Regional staff and facilitated discussion from 7 to 9:45 p.m. Forty-one members of the public signed the meeting register. Regional Councilor Deb Shulte and City Councilor Sandra Racco were both in attendance.

The purpose of the May 4<sup>th</sup> public consultation centre was to update residents and the business community by providing information about the project, to identify the alternative design options considered and evaluated, and present the preferred plan on the study. A key aim was to receive feedback from the public on the preferred plan, project schedule and next steps.

It should be noted that a number of other studies and projects are occurring including VIVA Next – Dedicated rapidway lanes on Highway 7 and the City of Vaughan Concord West Streetscape Master Plan study. The Region of York's Rutherford Road Class EA is being coordinated with this Keele Street Class EA Study.

Edward Chiu, Project Manager gave a presentation on the study purpose, findings, alternative options considered and evaluated and described the preferred plan. Sue Cumming of Cumming + Company an independent facilitator and public consultation specialist facilitated the discussion. The Facilitator prepared this public feedback report. The views and ideas expressed in this Report serve to provide an understanding of the public concerns and suggestions that they would like reviewed.

## **2. Public Feedback - Questions and Points Noted during the discussion**

The following are questions and points noted during the discussion. A majority of those in attendance live in the Concord West community located in the southeast quadrant of the Highway 7/Keele Street intersection and have many concerns about the increase in truck traffic, in lack of beautification in the area and in the impact to their homes from the Keele Street Class EA Preferred Plan and other projects being done in the area. The following is a synthesis of the questions and comments from the meeting organized by key topic and subject. They are numbered for ease of reference in reviewing and addressing the comments.

In addition to the discussion at the meeting, residents were encouraged to provide additional written comments on the meeting comment form. At the time of writing five comment forms had been received and these are being reviewed by Regional staff and R.V. Anderson Associates Limited.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Edward Chiu indicated that he would be reviewing the feedback and holding discussions with senior staff on the issues raised. The meeting feedback report will be posted on the Region's web site and the President of the Concord Ratepayers Association will be advised when it is available. Edward also agreed to attend at a meeting with the ratepayers to discuss and explain the final plan and recommendations. This will be set up after Regional staff have reviewed and prepared the final plan.

### **1. Residents questions the benefit of the study to the Concord West Area**

The EA study proposes that the improvements on Keele Street (and Highway 7) are pedestrian friendly and the social and environmental impacts will be addressed by the Region of York. Why is the Region assessing the potential effects on the natural and social environment? We see no benefits to the residents living in the Concord West Area from the proposed work. Why is Keele Street being widened and not any other street east/west of Keele Street? Why do you need to do this project?

Response: There is traffic congestion in this area and based on projected traffic, the situation is going to get worse. This area is heavily travelled by people going through the area. Some residents experience congestion. We need to balance how to accommodate traffic to reduce the congestion in the area and minimize the impact to the residential community. In the Concord West Area, the design has considered the possible impact that widening Keele Street might cause. Therefore, the widening of Keele Street from Rockview Gardens to Highway 7 has been shifted to the west to minimize impacts to the residents.

### **2. Residents express concern that this study is not taking the right steps – not supportive of widening for trucks**

Residents expressed the view that the widening will impact the community and they would like to see beautification of the area, not more traffic. They would like to see the Langstaff Road Extension across the railway corridor EA completed first and would like to see actions for getting the truck traffic away from the intersection of Keele and Highway 7.

### **3. Creating a two lane turning lane at Bowes Road is not favoured by residents**

Many residents oppose the double left turn lanes on Highway 7 onto Bowes Road and noted concerns that it will increase traffic in front of residents and will not solve the funnel effect and will clog up driveways. It was noted that 86% of the truck traffic goes to the Bowes Road industrial area today.

Concerns were expressed that Highway 7 with the bus lanes will be like St. Clair West. They would like the Region to consider the following:

- Find ways to reduce truck traffic on Highway 7 and Keele Street;
- Consider removing access to Bowes Road on Highway 7?
- Expropriate/buy property on the north side of Highway 7 (referencing the commercial building) instead of expropriating the houses south of Highway 7?
- Create a Creditstone Road exit to/from the 407 to reduce truck traffic on Keele Street?

**4. Other solutions suggested for reducing truck traffic including CN Rail flyover at Langstaff Road, new 407 access and extension of Doney Road and connection to Administration Road.**

Can a flyover be created over the CN Railway at Langstaff Road to reduce truck traffic at the Keele/Hwy .7 Intersection? Several residents raised the issue of wanting to have truck traffic reduced at the Keele Street and Highway 7 intersection and suggesting connecting Langstaff Road with a flyover over the CN Railway (similar to Portage Parkway), to reduce the truck traffic on Keele and Highway 7.

Can Doney Crescent be extended and connected with Administration Road? One resident noted that this has been raised at the first public meeting and she didn't see it being talked about tonight. Response: Edward Chiu advised that they looked at Doney extension. The Doney Crescent extension will be further investigated by the Vaughan Metropolitan Corporate Transportation Study. The extension may require removal of an existing building south of Highway 7.

It was noted by one resident that the City of Vaughan is looking into the possibility of deviating truck traffic onto Portage Road through the Vaughan Corporate Centre Plan. Residents would like the Region to look into building Langstaff Road across the railway tracks. Response: Edward Chiu advised that connecting Langstaff Road would require the cooperation and property of CN Rail. CN Rail will have to agree to sell their property to the Region or the City of Vaughan. The Region or the City does not have the right to expropriate land from CN because CN is formerly a federal agency and still has a similar level of authority. The Region is looking at Langstaff Road connections as part of the Vaughan Metropolitan Corporate Transportation Study.

It was suggested that MP Fantino be contacted to assist in talking with CN regarding joining Langstaff Road.

**5. Sidewalk at Keele and Highway 7 described as dangerous**

Concern were noted about the condition and safety of the sidewalk at Keele and Highway 7 noting that it is dangerous and wanted to know how the Region was planning on improving the current situation. Response: The proposed Keele Street design will have a wider boulevard separating the proposed 1.5m sidewalk and back of curb.

**6. Residents ask if this is a done deal.**

Has the proposed plan shown at this PCC been approved? Response: No, there is no approval yet. The plan being presented tonight is our preferred plan. We want to hear from you and will review the feedback and comments that we receive.

**7. Isn't VIVA going ahead anyway? – there are changes that residents would like to see**

VIVA representatives were available during the open house and evening discussion to respond to questions. Residents had a number of comments and concerns about the planned project some of which are noted as follows: Why can't VIVA/Region look into expanding Highway 7 on the north side? There is not enough area on the south side of Highway 7. The dedicated bus lanes on Highway 7 are not required. Is VIVA going to respond to the letter that was sent? - What's going to happen at Highway 7 and Centre Street? - Placing intermodal hub at the southwest corner of Highway 7 and Centre Street. Response: Edward Chiu advised that the VIVA Environmental Assessment has been approved. Highway 7 is a VIVA project and VIVA plans are to move ahead. He encouraged people to speak directly with VIVA representatives on their specific ideas and concerns. He further advised that he was coordinating with VIVA and with the City of Vaughan on the Streetscape Master Plan.

**8. Will the CN Bridge on Keele Street be replaced?**

Response: The recommendation is for the CN Bridge on Keele Street to be replaced and widened.

**9. When will the Subway to Steeles be scheduled to open?**

Response: David Clark of VIVA responded that the Subway is scheduled to be in service in December 2015

**10. Bottlenecks will be a concern south of Steeles if there is no widening in Toronto**

Residents raised concerns about eliminating the widening of Keele Street south of Steeles in the City of Toronto noting that this situation will cause a bottleneck effect similar to what is being experienced at Dufferin Street and Steeles Avenue. Bottlenecks were noted to occur anytime you cross south into Toronto. There was discussion at the meeting about the interface with the City of Toronto and need for coordination. Response: Edward Chiu advised that it is the City of Toronto's policy to not widen any road to accommodate vehicular purpose within its boundaries. He further noted that this is a well known issue within the Region and that the Commissioner and other Senior staff were in discussions with the City of Toronto regarding this matter.

**11. Can you beautify the area and start by burying the hydro cables on Keele Street ?**

It was noted that burying the hydro cables is a possibility. The cost difference between aerial and buried cables may be as high as \$5 million.

Later in the meeting, a resident questioned if the Region can spend \$750,000 and \$735,000 on the EA study and design, then why can't they spend \$5 Million on burying the hydro cables? Response: Edward Chiu commented that as noted, we will look into the possibility of burying the hydro cables on Keele Street in the Concord West Areas.

**12. Are the EA studies for Rutherford Road and Keele being coordinated?**

It was noted that yes, Regional staff are coordinating the Keele Street and Rutherford Road Class EA studies. All traffic data at the intersection will be coordinated and incorporated in the Rutherford Road design.

**13. Will GO be looking at opening a GO station on Dufferin Street in the near future?**

One resident commented that this would reduce the traffic of people coming from the north and east to take the GO on Keele and Rutherford. Response: This is a GO transit issue and the Region does not have much influence on GO. The Regional Council has been pitching to GO and the Province about the importance of GO's presence in the community.

**14. Is a grade separation planned at Keele and Highway 7?**

Edward Chiu advised that a grade separation is not planned because of a creek in the vicinity, which would force Highway 7 to be constructed over Keele Street. There would also be significant impact to residents and businesses in the vicinity of the intersection.

**15. What criteria were used to determine the truck traffic and residential traffic? This widening of Keele Street feels like it is being proposed to accommodate truck traffic.**

Edward Chiu advised that the proposed Keele widening is proposed to accommodate both truck and residential traffic. With the increase in the number of residential subdivisions north of Rutherford Road, there will be a higher traffic demand on Keele Street which needs to be accommodated. He indicated that traffic is expected to increase in this area and the preferred plan would lessen this impact.

**16. Is the bridge east of Bowes Road getting widened? If not we still have a bottle neck at this area.**

Response: The Bridge on Hghway 7 is not planned for widening. Edward Chiu advised that east of Bowes Road, there will be no dedicated bus lanes and VIVA will operate in mixed traffic.

**17. Residents want Region to relook at standard for median in this area**

Some residents think that the medians that are planned for Keele Street seem dangerous because they are too high, others don't see the value in spending the money, others do like the greening and feel that the Concord West Area needs to be beautified but would like to see smaller medians and planters and other features in the medians. There were questions about how the urban cross-section came to be. Questions included: Did the Region get any feedback from the public regarding these guidelines? Why waste so much money on medians like on Dufferin Street? They are not very useful.

Response: It is a requirement by the Region of York for roadways with six or more lanes to provide medians with plants/trees to beautify the road and also prevents the road from looking like a highway/freeway. A study was undertaken and was approved by Regional Council on the approved guideline. Edward Chiu advised that he would review the cross-section and median details with senior staff and share the concerns raised by the public on the preferred plan. He will look into this particular situation and make appropriate modification/changes to the design where appropriate. He stressed that maintaining safety is a priority.

**18. Residents don't believe that the Region is listening to their complaints and suggestions and want to see more focus on residential not industrial in area.**

Some residents stated that they feel that meeting is a waste of time! Concord West Area residents are frustrated by the impact to their community from Keele and Highway 7, truck traffic, VIVA proposals and this study. Other residents reiterated that they believe that the Region is not listening to the residents' complaints and suggestions. Medians are too expensive. Trees in medians are unnecessary. Public transit is inefficient. The cost to use the service is very high and the service provided is very poor. There has been poor planning on part of the York Region and City of Vaughan. At the Keele Street and Highway 7 intersection, congestion is already very high. The last public meeting for Keele Street was 4 years ago (2007)

and none of the feedback provided then is reflected in today's meeting. We want a residential area here, not industrial. People do not trust that concerns and suggestions presented in today's meeting will be addressed in the EA report. It was noted that the presentation tonight is much better than that at the Concord West Ratepayers Association Meeting three weeks ago but not seeing change to plans.

Response: Edward Chiu noted that the first public meeting was held in 2007 and looked at overall need and potential alternatives. He recently met with the Concord West Ratepayers Association and received a great deal of input similar to what is being received tonight. He explained that the information being presented tonight and the preferred plan is the same so as to receive feedback from the general public as well. Once all the feedback is received, Regional staff and the consultants will review the input and address what changes they can. Concord West residents would like a meeting once the Region has considered the input to discuss the finalized plans. One individual representing his family who live in the area asked if monthly follow-up newsletters be provided to residents to let them know of the development on this project and increase transparency. Response: Regional staff has been communicating with the Concord West Ratepayers Association representative and will continue to do so. The public meeting report will be made available for review by all.

#### ***19. How much is the EA costing?***

It was noted that the cost of the Class EA study is \$700,000. The residents indicated that there was also another \$735,000 just approved that week. Edward Chiu advised that this money is budgeted for the detailed design when the EA is complete and that it has not been awarded yet.

#### ***20. Will the residents be provided with the comments/suggestions/discussions from today's meeting?***

It was further noted that the public meeting record would be made available to the residents through the web site. Edward Chiu will contact the Ratepayer President once it is available and will follow-up to arrange a meeting once the Region has finalized its review.

**Councilor Racco:** - This study started in 2006 and since then there have been a number of other significant studies started. There should be communication between the various studies being done in the Keele Street/Highway 7 area. She noted that she is concerned with the double left turn lanes at Bowes Road and questions why the traffic is being suggested to be moved from a regional road to smaller road? She commented that this plan is inconsiderate to the residents on the south side of Highway 7. There will be trucks lined up during the rush hour in front of these residents' homes. Is expropriating the residents on the south side of Highway 7 right? They already have shallow lots. Instead, the Region should look into expanding the road on the north side and provide the residents with a nice boulevard on the south side. She noted that the issue of connecting Langstaff over the CN railway tracks has been raised with CN and that perhaps it is time for Metrolinx to take over the extension of Langstaff Road over the CN tracks. She suggested that the industries along Keele Street could be asked to contribute financially to bury the hydro cables and agrees that this would be an important step to beautify the area. She shared her frustrations with the lack of action from the City of Toronto.

#### ***21. Concern about reducing width of lanes in high truck traffic area.***

A resident from the northern part of the study area indicated that in his view the truck traffic will not disappear and that Keele Street and Highway 7 is an industrial area. He is concerned that the future lanes are too narrow (being narrowed to 11 feet from 12 feet) which will bring trucks close to the cars creating a more dangerous situation. He agrees with others that a lot of real

estate is wasted on the medians – 5.5m wide. He thinks that the medians on Dufferin Street have resulted in a lot of traffic being diverted from Dufferin to Keele Street. Response: Regional staff will review the proposed width of the traffic lanes.

**22. Question about who makes the ultimate decision of following through with the “improvements” on Keele Street?**

**Councilor Schulte** advised that the Region will make the decision. She indicated that there will be more dialogue with stakeholders on the final plan and expects that the transparency will be there. The meeting notes will be provided to the residents. She noted that these meetings are important for people to share their views and that she has been listening carefully to the discussion. She noted that the increase in traffic is not just the result of commercial traffic. The urban boundary expansion north of Rutherford has also contributed to the increase in traffic at Keele and Highway 7. She stressed the importance of providing input on these larger studies that eventually come to impact areas like this one. She noted that there has been tremendous change in the last four years. She thinks that staff is trying to do their best to make improvements but really need to hear from people about what will work in each area.

She commented that the six lane design was intended to ensure that we didn't end up with a large asphalt area and the median with trees was incorporated to make a six lane road visually appealing. She inquired as whether there is a consensus on the greening aspects of the median. She heard that many don't want the medians.

She noted that the Bowes Road option was undertaken to balance traffic in the area. Based on the feedback today, Regional staff will go back and re-investigate the Bowes Road option.

Representatives from Concord West Ratepayers Association further advised that they don't like the size of medians but do want to see some beautification undertaken. They would like to see trees and flowers.

Further concerns were noted about the signalized crossing at Highway 7 and Keele. It was determined that the signal timing and light synchronization need to be addressed. It seems that the timing for counting down the crossing is not working. Response: Edward Chiu will raise this with Operations staff to get it looked at and fixed as soon as possible.

The discussion concluded at 9:45 p.m.