



To: General Purposes Committee

Date: September 28, 2015

From: Victor Wei, P. Eng.
Director, Transportation

File: 01-0150-20-
THIG1/2015-Vol 01

Re: **Update on George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project – Highway 99 Widening**

Staff Recommendation

1. That the staff report titled “Update on George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project – Highway 99 Widening” dated September 28, 2015 from the Director, Transportation be forwarded to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure’s George Massey Tunnel Replacement project team for consideration in the development of the Project Definition Report.
2. That a letter be sent by Mayor Brodie, on behalf of Council, to the Agriculture Land Commission and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, with copies to all Richmond MLA’s, advising of the City’s concerns with any potential widening of Highway 99 on the west side impacting existing established institutions and farming of their backlands.

Victor Wei, P. Eng.
Director, Transportation
(604-276-4131)

Att. 2

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Intergovernmental Relations & Protocol Unit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Policy Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

At the July 27, 2015 Council meeting, staff presented a report that provided a status update on the George Massey Tunnel Replacement (GMTR) project as well as sought approval of a letter being sent to BC Hydro on preferred options for the relocation of the BC Hydro transmission line from the tunnel. In that report, staff noted the potential impacts of the wider crossing and highway on adjacent farmland were not known at that time and staff continued to reiterate to MoTI that the project should ensure a net zero or positive impact to agriculture land.

Since that time, staff have learnt from property owners along the west side of Highway 99 between Steveston Highway and Blundell Road being contacted by the GMTR project team that there might be property acquisition required for widening Highway 99. This report provides an update on staff's recent discussions with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI)'s GMTR Project team on the issue of potential property impacts as well as other new information since the last update report.

Analysis

Proposed Widening of Highway 99

Staff continue to have regular meetings with the project team members, typically every two weeks. As noted in the previous report, MoTI's GMTR project team continues with their technical planning work for the project including data collection and preliminary studies such as potential environmental impacts. These studies will contribute to their upcoming submission to the BC Environmental Assessment Office. One of the recent topics of discussions was related to the potential need for property acquisition along Highway 99 by MoTI as staff received anecdotal information several weeks ago from the adjacent property owners who indicated that such acquisition was identified in their communications with the GMTR project team.

Based on the above discussions, the GMTR project team has confirmed to staff the potential for widening of Highway 99 as the number of lanes along this highway corridor would need to be increased as part of the bridge project. The team also indicated that they had begun contacting property owners along the corridor to introduce themselves and inform them of the project and potential impacts.

On several occasions, staff also referenced the City's Backland Policy and that there has been an active referral from Council for staff to report back on developing the Policy.

Potential Property Impacts

As noted above, over the past several weeks, staff were contacted by one of the property owner representatives on the west side of Highway 99 between Steveston Highway and Blundell Road who advised that MoTI representatives had indicated a potential need to acquire additional highway right-of-way from the adjacent property along the east edge of the property (west edge side of Highway 99) in order to accommodate the proposed highway widening. Further, staff have also been informed by MoTI staff that input from the Agriculture Land Commission (ALC)

was such that their preference was for any widening of the Highway 99 corridor to be carried out on the west side which was considered by ALC as less actively farmed. See Attachment 1 for a map showing the general area of potential widening of the Highway 99 corridor.

In an attempt to obtain more detailed information, staff contacted the Ministry's GMTR project team on September 24, 2015 asking for clarification and the specific proposal for such road widening including:

- the purpose of the highway widening
- confirmation of where any highway widening would take place
- the extent of highway widening
- the amount of property MoTI is pursuing for highway widening
- which property owners have been contacted by MoTI
- what information is being shared with the property owners both verbal and in writing;
- timing of acquiring the property;
- intentions for RMA retention or relocation; and
- the proposed cross section of the proposed widened highway.

Despite requests from staff for more detailed highway and right-of-way information such as the number of proposed traffic lanes, width of proposed widening and the dimensions of any right-of-way shortages along Highway 99, no such details were shared by the GMTR project team so far. Furthermore, at the time of preparation of this report, no specific information was provided to staff on the extent of the impact on properties or any design drawings for the proposed Highway 99 widening. Hence, at this time, there is insufficient information provided to staff to technically verify the property needs for the widening.

In response, the project team provided the following general information in an e-mail dated September 28, 2015. Staff also subsequently met with team members later that same day on September 28, 2015 to discuss the matter further; the information provided by the GMTR project team from that meeting is summarized below.

- a) The widening is to improve safety, provide dedicated transit lanes and improve drainage facilities for stormwater management on Ministry and Richmond lands adjacent to the roadway.
- b) The existing highway right-of-way section of Highway 99 between Blundell Road and Steveston Highway is much narrower than the corridor to the north. To the north of Blundell Road, the highway right-of-way is much wider.
- c) Any property acquisition for the Highway 99 widening would also take into account property needs for a potential future Blundell Interchange. Any property acquisition would take into account the "worst case scenario" as MoTI prefers to secure the ultimate property needs for the long term as opposed to approaching the same property again to acquire more land in the future.
- d) At this time, no definitive amount of land acquisition has been determined by the GMTR project team as the amount varies depending on the design of the Highway 99 widening

and options for the Steveston Interchange which are both work in progress. When meeting with the property owners in the area, the GMTR project team informed the owners that they had not determined the exact amount of impact but did indicate on an aerial map of each property the area of potential impact.

- e) Details of information shared between the GMTR project team and property owners are confidential and, therefore, cannot be shared with the City at this time.
- f) The GMTR project team have considered the potential widening on the east side of Highway 99, however, are focusing on the west side because of the preference indicated by the ALC (as noted earlier) as well as the constraints of the existing BC Hydro's overhead transmission line and the future jet fuel being on the east side of the highway.

Regarding Item c) above on the proposed property acquisition for a future Blundell Interchange by the GMTR project team, staff had previously advised the project team on the need to carry out a business case analysis for this potential new interchange as their traffic analysis to date indicated there would be more disbenefits than benefits to Richmond. Based on the GMTR traffic model forecasts, the disbenefits include increased traffic being projected to divert from the new interchange to rural roads east of Highway 99 such as Sidaway Road (as also noted in staff's last report to Council on July 27, 2015). Therefore, the current pursuit of additional property by the project team to accommodate this new potential interchange is considered by staff as premature without first completing the thorough business case analysis as noted.

No. 5 Road Backlands Policy

Any proposed widening of Highway 99 on the west side would have implications to the current review and update of the Backlands Policy by the City.

The City's Backlands Policy, which was approved by Council in 1990 and revised in 2000, requires land uses permitted in the "Assembly (ASY)" zoning district on the westerly 110 m of properties on No. 5 Road and all proposals for lands subject to the Policy to enter into legal agreements as deemed necessary to require uses to farm activities on the backlands.

Council has concerns with the lack of farming on some of these properties, hence a referral was made at the May 20, 2015 Planning Committee, where staff are to examine and report back on the following:

- 1) *Overall vision for the No. 5 Road backlands;*
- 2) *Options for a farm access road along the backlands from Blundell Road to Steveston Highway;*
- 3) *Options to assemble properties along No. 5 Road to create an agricultural "green" zone; and*
- 4) *The properties that comply with the requirements of the No. 5 Backlands Policy No. 5037.*

In order for staff to complete the review and make recommendations, it is necessary to obtain details from MoTI on the potential land takings from these properties and understand the impacts

on the backlands. For example, the size of future enhanced farm lands at the back of these properties and determination of the location of a potential farm access road would be impacted by the extent of Highway 99 widening.

Expansion Plans at Mosque at 12300 Blundell Road

The non-farm use application for the mosque expansion at 12300 Blundell Road was endorsed by Council on November 24, 2014 and forwarded to the ALC for approval. The ALC subsequently approved the application on June 23, 2015. Staff have informed the GMTR project team of this approval by ALC as it appears contradictory to what they understood from the ALC on their preference to widen on the west side. Should the GMTR project proceed to acquire additional right-of-way from this site, the existing and proposed on-site parking and circulation would be impacted.

Riparian Management Area

The GMTR project footprint includes designated 15 metre Riparian Management Areas (RMA) on the west and east side of the Highway 99 corridor. Staff have been referencing these RMAs from the onset of the planning process and has reiterated the priority for their protection and/or compensation to the satisfaction of the City and senior government agencies (e.g. Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations). To date, no compensation planning has been discussed, however, staff recognize that it will be addressed as part of the Environmental Assessment process for the GMTR project.

Other Updates on GMTR Project

In recent discussions, the GMTR project team also updated staff on the following items:

1. North Limit of Project Scope - MoTI have indicated that the previous north limit of the scope of work was to Westminster Highway. In a recent meeting, the GMTR team indicated that they were extending the project limit further north to Highway 91 due to the potential need to replace the Westminster Highway overpass structure and the associated widening of Highway 99 to Highway 91. No property acquisition is anticipated here by MoTI at this time as there is sufficient right-of-way north of Blundell Road. MoTI also indicated that no widening is anticipated north of Highway 91.
2. Project Definition Report (PDR) – MoTI reiterated that the timing of the release of the PDR for the GMTR project is still uncertain at this time but indicated it would likely be released in late Fall by the end of 2015.
3. Tunnel De-Commissioning - Although MoTI has not released the PDR yet, in a recent discussion regarding the decommissioning of the tunnel they did indicate that an option was being considered to remove the middle four sections while leaving the ends intact in order to minimize potential impacts (e.g. environmental, costs, etc).
4. Steveston Interchange - The GMTR team is still exploring options for the Steveston Interchange, including a three-level option to minimize the footprint of the interchange

on adjacent farmlands. Staff advised that consideration should be given to the potential visual and noise impacts caused by the height of such an option.

5. Project Schedule - MoTI have indicated the following schedule for the GMTR project:

- Release of the PDR in late Fall 2015 for public consultation
- Submission to the Environmental Assessment (EA) office in early 2016
- EA process (with working group meetings) – legislated 180-day review period
- Completion of the EA process and certificate issuance anticipated in 2017 (subject to the EA Office timeline)
- Construction to begin in 2017

In response to staff's question on the progress of determining the financial strategy for the new bridge, GMTR team advised that there is no new information or progress on this matter.

Proposed Action

In light of:

- the potential intrusion into existing farm lands due to Highway 99 widening;
- Council's endorsed GMTR project objective of "net zero or positive impact to agriculture land";
- the potential negative implications to the City's Backlands Policy; and
- presence of the RMA (and requirement for no net loss)

it is therefore recommended that the City expresses these concerns, as well as the lack of a Project Definition Report (PDR) and financing strategy, in a letter to the Minister of MoTI and ALC requesting for measures to avoid or fully compensate for such impacts and early sharing of the PDR and financing strategy.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project includes widening of Highway 99 between Highway 91 and Steveston Highway. The existing highway right-of-way south of Blundell Road is narrower than to the north and, therefore, there is potential impact to the properties along this corridor. The Agriculture Land Commission (ALC) has indicated to MoTI a preference for widening to occur on the west side of the highway, despite giving approval for expansion plans at one of the properties in June 2015. In light of this contradiction as well as Council's Backlands Policy for properties on the west side, staff

recommend that the MoTI and ALC be advised of the City's concerns as noted in this report in order to ensure the municipal objectives are adhered to.



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Att. 1: Map showing potential widening in the Highway 99 corridor



September 2015

Proposed Widening of Highway 99 as Part of the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project