



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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Ministry of Transportation
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GTA West Advisory Panel:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is Canada's largest voluntary general farm organization, representing more than 36,000 family farm businesses across Ontario. These farm businesses form the backbone of our robust food system and rural communities with the potential to drive the Ontario economy forward.

Several of our county federations have a direct stake in this issue. They believe that the GTA West Corridor is necessary to divert traffic from local roads. Traffic-clogged roads make farm vehicle movements from farm to farm extremely difficult. Actions that divert traffic from local roads are positive steps.

Farmers throughout the corridor area have been waiting for a firm decision on the proposed GTA West Corridor project. Farm business decisions have been put on hold due to the uncertainty around this project. Farmers and other businesses within the proposed corridor area deserve a clear and unequivocal answer as to the project's future.

1. How is your organization planning for the introduction and adoption of new technologies, such as autonomous vehicles and electric vehicles, and how do you think they may change travel and transit demand in the Greater Toronto Area?

While a number of farm vehicles (tractors, combines) are already available with "self-steering" technology intended solely for in-field use, this technology is not applicable for on-road use. There may be on-road applications for autonomous vehicles used by businesses that either deliver inputs to farms (e.g. seed, feed, fertilizer, fuel) or transport farm products to markets, or for further processing (e.g. fruits, vegetables, grains, oil seeds, livestock, poultry, milk).

Farmers live in areas unserved by public transit hence they rely totally on private vehicles for their transportation needs. Given the greater distance between rural and urban areas, the destination for many trips, the range limitations of electric vehicles combined with the absence of ready access to charging stations tends to exclude electric vehicles from the rural vehicle mix. OFA also notes that rural residents pay higher electricity rates than do their urban counterparts, an added disincentive to adopting electric vehicles.

At this point, OFA is not considering the adoption of new technologies, such as autonomous vehicles and electric vehicles in its policy discussions and proposals.

2. How does your organization foresee car sharing services, such as Uber, influencing travel and transit demand in the Greater Toronto Area?

OFA does not see car sharing services influencing rural travel demand, given the generally remote nature of rural areas, combined with their low population densities. It is also likely that the low population densities of rural areas will make these areas unappealing to car sharing services.

3. How do you foresee recent Provincial policy changes, such as Moving Ontario Forward, Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and the Coordinated Review of Provincial Plans, impacting the Environmental Assessment recommendations including the GTA West Corridor?

With respect to the Coordinated Review of Provincial Plans, Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIA) are defined in the draft Greenbelt Plan, “a study that evaluates the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the Agricultural System and recommends ways to avoid, or if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts”. OFA supports the use of AIAs for assessing the potential impacts on agriculture from non-agricultural development. A linear transportation corridor would be one example of non-agricultural development. The potential impacts of a linear transportation corridor and their mitigation should be fully studied should the Ontario government decide to proceed with the GTA West Corridor.

4. Are there other infrastructure improvements that could be made to address goods movement in the Greater Toronto Area?

Farm vehicles tend to be wider, longer and much slower than other road users. Too often we find that roads are designed without consideration for farm vehicles that use them. Overall, OFA recommends that new roadways as well as improvements to existing roadways, be designed to accommodate farm vehicles. Among the design aspects that need to be included to accommodate farm vehicles are;

- guard rails set back the edge of the pavement to leave a shoulder area to accommodate wide equipment,
- gently sloped shoulders to keep shoulders usable,
- avoidance of hard 90° curbs, which can lead to equipment damage,
- traffic circles wide enough to facilitate the through movement of farm vehicles, and
- bridges, overpasses and underpasses that enable the free movement of farm vehicles.

5. Are there other recent relevant studies related to other infrastructure that are relevant?

OFA is not aware of any additional infrastructure-related studies.

6. Should the GTA West Corridor be protected for other transportation needs?

OFA understands that the proposed right-of-way is intended to also accommodate a dedicated bus route parallel to the highway. We are not sure if there is a role for a commuter rail line co-located within this right-of-way.

OFA proposes that the government should consider co-locating a range of other infrastructure within the proposed right-of-way; water pipelines, natural gas pipelines, electricity transmission

lines and fibre-optic lines. We are not sure if a commuter rail line is needed here, but commuter rail lines may be viable elsewhere within the area covered by the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review.

7. What are your views on the appropriate path forward for the Environmental Assessment?

From OFA's perspective, a full Agricultural Impact Assessment should be an integral part, if the Ontario government opts to proceed with the GTA West Corridor.

Sincerely,



Don McCabe
OFA President

DM/pj

cc: OFA Board of Directors