

 <b>DRYDEN</b> <b>The Corporation of The City of Dryden</b>	<h1>STAFF REPORT</h1>	For Administration Use Only:  Meeting Date: June 14, 2021  Open <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/>  Approved for Agenda: [CAO]  Report No. PW-2021-06
Date Submitted:	June 04/2021	
Title:	<b>MTO Letter Re: Extension of Highway #502</b>	
Prepared by:	Blake Poole – Manager of Public Works Services	
Department:	Public Works Services	

### Recommendation:

**THAT, Council accepts this report for information purposes and requests direction from Council on how they wish to proceed and respond to this letter.**

### Background:

The Dryden Area Highway Planning Study was initiated by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) in February 2003 to examine long range transportation needs for Highway #17 and Highway #502 through the City of Dryden. The purpose of the planning study was to identify lands for both highway corridors and to protect these lands for long term highway requirements. In March 2008, this planning study with its recommended corridors achieved environmental clearance.

During initial discussions Council did not agree with the bypass proposal and indicated they would like to see an improved Highway #17 through Dryden as well as an improved Gordon Road. (Council Resolution August 05/2003)

In 2006 the City also received a letter from the Ministry asking for a resolution in support of the Highway #502 designation on Gordon Road. No further follow up.

In October 2008 the Highway #17 corridor proposal was included as an Official Plan amendment and adopted by Council. The amendment for the Highway #502 alignment was deferred to 2009 at which time the City was conducting an Official Plan review. The

MTO Letter Re: Extension of Highway #502  
June 04, 2021

Ministry was advised that Council felt that this would provide time for consultation with the Ministry regarding future capital plans for connecting link.

In March/April 2010 the Ministry requested support from Council again There is no follow up documentation available from the City or MTO.

**Discussion:**

The City's Chief Administrative Officer, Roger Nesbitt, received a letter from the Ministry of Transportation on May 07/2021 titled Re: Extension of Highway 502.

The planned corridor of Gordon Road and Marguerite Street is currently jointly owned by the City of Dryden and the Ministry of Transportation with the Ministry's portion being administered by the local roads board. In recent years there have been shared concerns about the shared administration of the road as well as its poor shape. The Ministry states it hopes to resolve this issue by moving forward with the planned extension of Highway #502.

The Ministry states this will eliminate issues with shared administration, the Ministry would assume full liability for all necessary capital costs (currently estimated at \$400,000 in total), future maintenance costs, and all costs associated with the railway crossing.

The Ministry would also like to acknowledge this is a separate initiative from the Highway #17 bypass North of Dryden. The Ministry has no plans to proceed with the bypass at this time.

Secondly, they acknowledge Duke Street/Highway #594 would no longer meet policy requirements for Connecting Link designation. The Ministry would need to examine this designation should the assumption proceed, this would not be undertaken until after the assumption process and the needed Capital Rehabilitation is complete. The potential loss of Capital Funding through the Connecting Link program would be offset by being relieved of all costs for Gordon Road.

MTO would like to start a dialogue and is seeking a Resolution from the City of Dryden indicating:

*The City of Dryden approves of the Ministry's proposal to proceed with establishing the new route for Highway #502 along the corridor that was selected as part of the Dryden Area Highway Planning Study.*

Staff have the following comments and concerns:

- Gordon Road does require Capital Work and the City has approached the Ministry previously about rehabilitation work requirements.
- The centerline of Gordon Road is not necessarily the border. Gordon Road weaves in and out of City and MTO property for approximately 2.95 km. The Marguerite Street bridge over the Wabigoon River is owned by MTO exclusively.
- There is a definite concern on losing the Connecting Link designation of the Highway #594 / Duke Street corridor. The corridor is 3.85 km long, contains 5 sets of traffic lights, and 2 large Bridges (Wabigoon River and CP Rail Overpass). These assets are very expensive to replace and rehabilitate without 90 % funding.
- There are also economic factors to consider. Tyler Peacock City of Dryden Economic Officer states, "Regarding Tourism and Economic Development, the proposed extension of Highway 502 presents additional challenges for our businesses located along the existing route – through Dryden. In light of COVID-19, and the extensive damage it has caused to our businesses who embrace the additional traffic as a result of tourism, this would be an additional and substantial blow. At this point in time, our businesses need every opportunity possible to gain additional traffic provided by tourism. Our community is a jumping off point to Sunset Country. Extending highway 502 to by-pass Dryden from visitors coming North to explore what this region has to offer, goes against our community's efforts to welcome and embrace tourism. Currently, traffic coming from the South enter our community and get a wonderful view of our river, residential area, pool, fitness centre, arena, parks, green space, riverfront boardwalk and trail, docks, boat launch, restaurants, downtown businesses and accommodators, restaurant with volleyball court, grocery store, fuel station, and much more – making the first impression a memorable one. If the 502 extension moves forward, tourists may not have the same first impression of our community and they certainly would not have a view of the aforementioned amenities."

Council has multiple Options on how to proceed:

- Proceed with the resolution.
- Negotiate a deal on the Highway #594/Duke Street Assets and a new Highway #502 corridor through staff or council.
- Turn down the request for a resolution.

**Attachments (Reference Material):**

Ministry of Transportation Letter Re: Extension of Highway 502  
Council Resolutions August 05, 2003 (2)