



# Addressing Transportation Planning Needs in The Blue Mountains

---

AMO Delegation – Ministry of Transportation

August 16, 2022

# Topics for Discussion

1. Transportation Master Plan Project Update
2. Regional Collaboration and Coordination with MTO Staff
3. South Georgian Bay Regional Transportation Needs

# 1. Transportation Master Plan Update

The Town is currently developing a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to ensure that growth is managed in a sustainable and forward-thinking manner. This plan is anticipated to identify the desired role of MTO to support the long-term local and regional movement of people and goods.

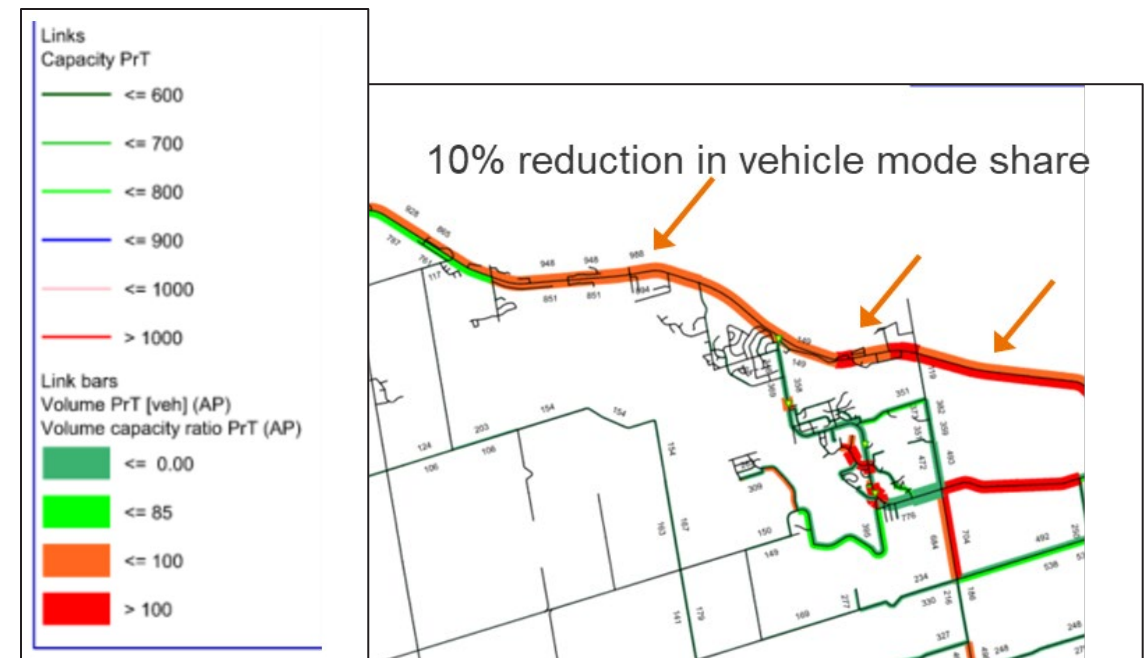
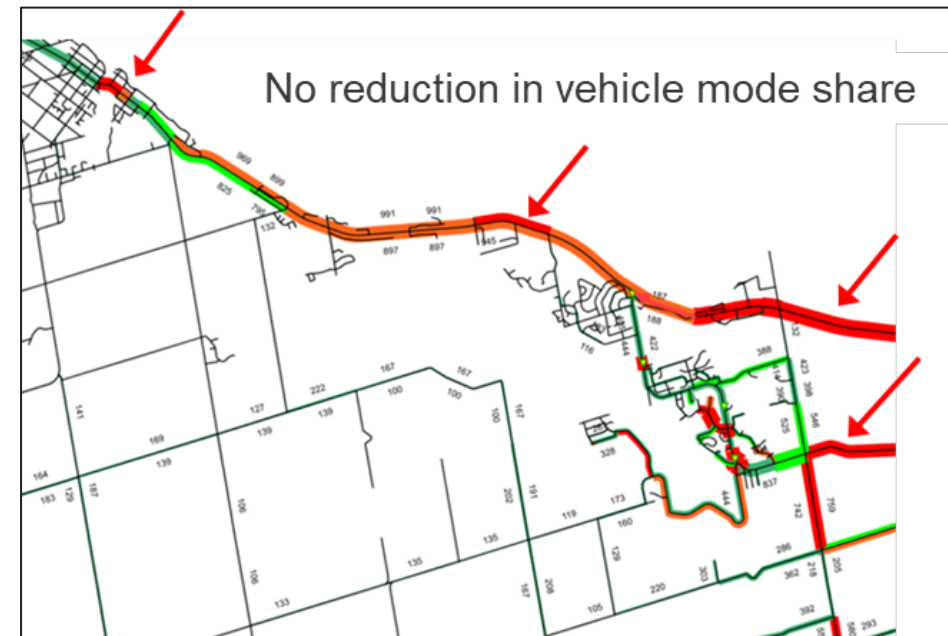
## Context

- The Blue Mountains serves as a key economic driver for both tourism and agriculture in Ontario.
  - The Town welcomes over 2.5 million visitors annually with tourism related jobs representing over 21% of total tourism jobs within Grey County.
  - The Town accounts for over 15% of total acres of apple crop in the Province and 14% of total agricultural jobs within Grey County.
- The Town has an increased interest in ensuring that a safe, efficient and strategic approach to transportation development is undertaken on both a regional and provincial level **regardless of municipal boundaries**.
- Transportation issues are strained due growing seasonal demands, geographic constraints and regional population growth pressures.
- MTO staff are participating in the TMP Technical Advisory Group

## What is the TMP telling us?

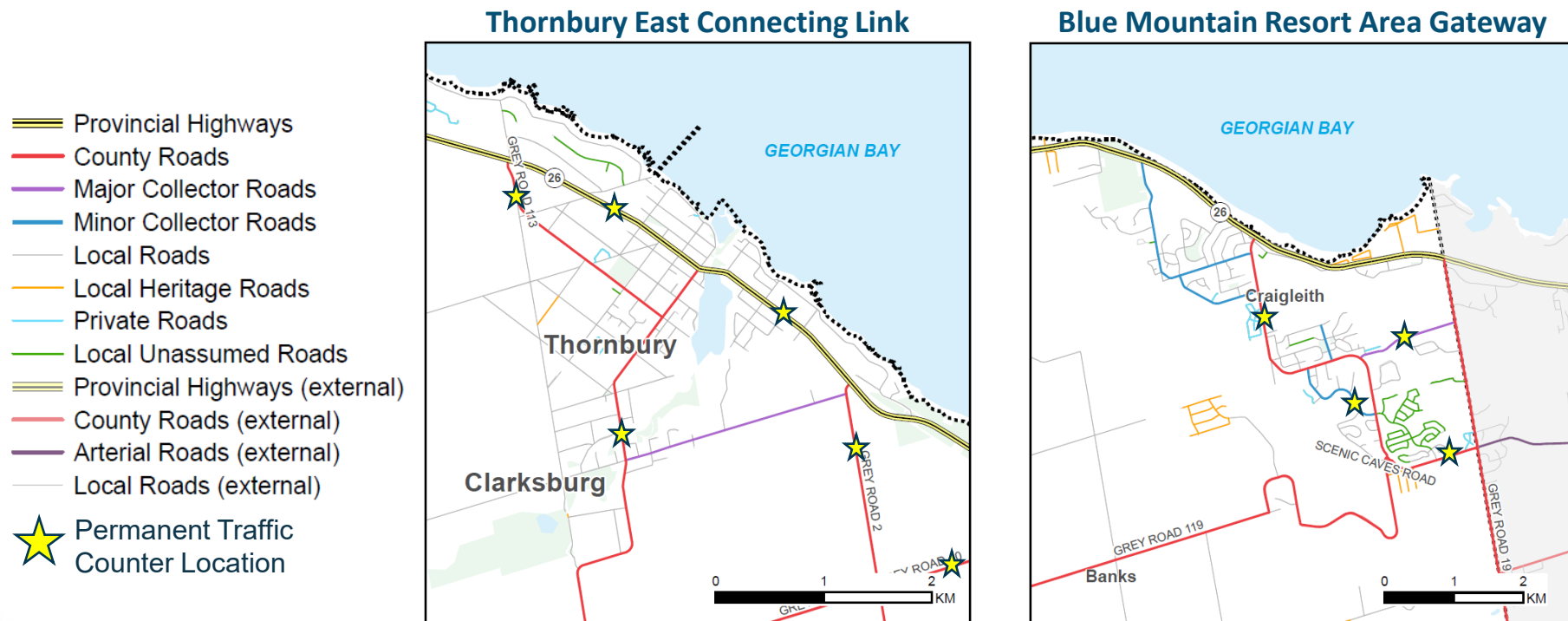
- The Town has opportunities to improve active transportation and public transportation in coordination with neighbouring municipalities
- TMP traffic forecasting indicates that Highway 26 pinch-points are reaching capacity during peak travel periods
- Results are consistent with MTO's Highway 26 Needs Assessment which indicated that a "Thornbury bypass" is expected to be required between 2020 and 2030
- Highway 26 capacity issues within The Blue Mountains will continue to worsen even with achieving mode-share targets
- Long-term Highway 26 capacity issues cannot be effectively addressed without regional MTO leadership

**The Town requests that MTO consider recommendations in the final TMP that rely on MTO participation and leadership, and continue working with Town staff to find opportunities for improving Highway 26 within The Blue Mountains.**



## New Traffic Data Infrastructure

- January 2022 - Town invested in 10 permanent traffic counters to monitor major roads and gateways including the Connecting Link, County roads and local roads.
- Traffic volume, speed, vehicle class and other traffic characteristics are being collected to better understand traffic patterns over time and support future transportation infrastructure planning.
- Funding support was provided through the Provincial Municipal Modernization Grant and from Town Council.

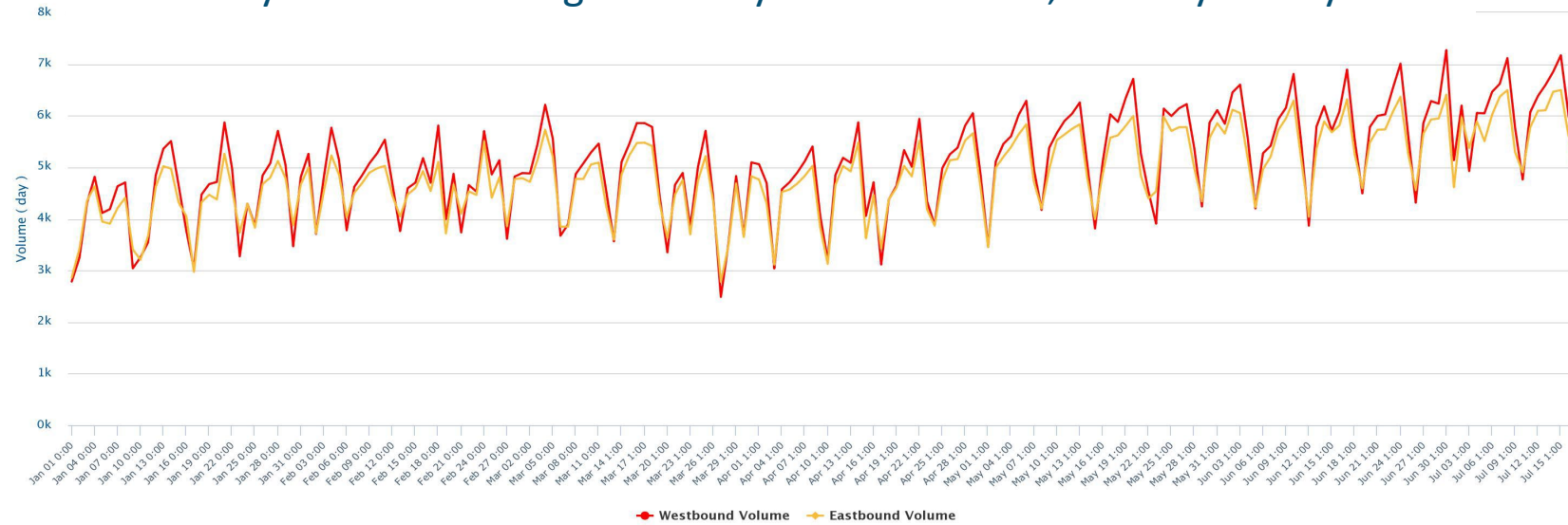


## Traffic Data Examples

### Thornbury East (Connecting Link)

- Weekend/weekday volume variation
- Greater summer volumes
- Summer traffic increases approaching weekends and peaks on most Saturdays.

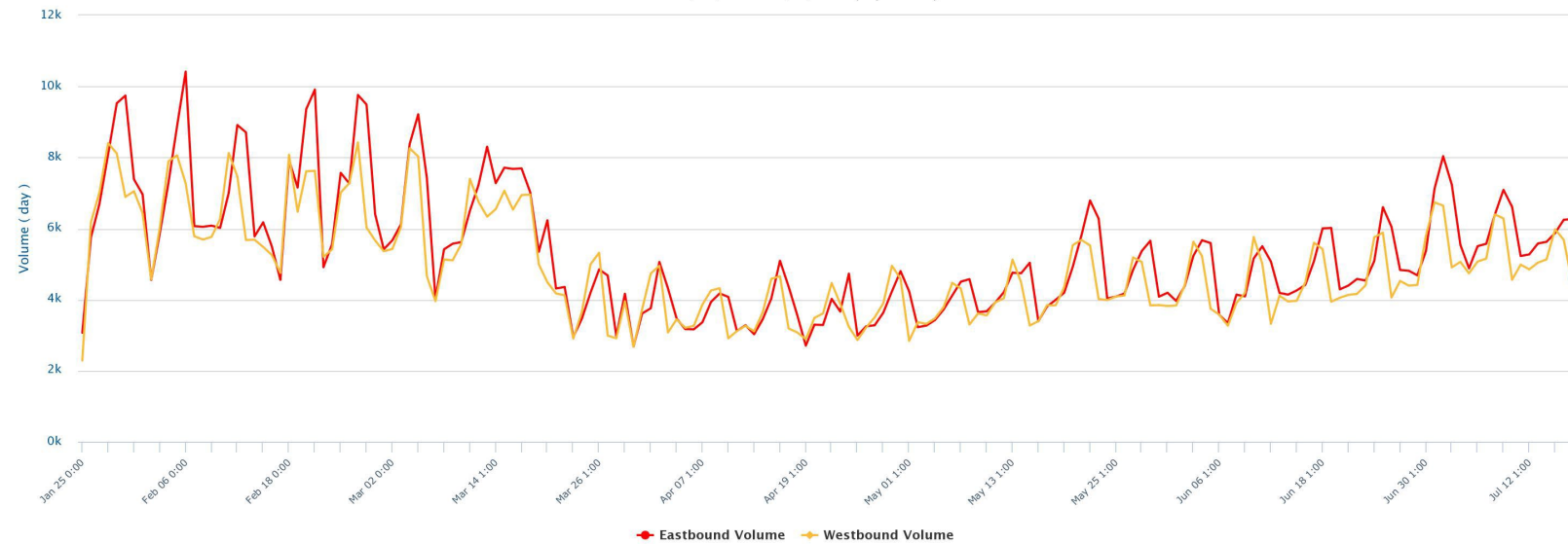
### Thornbury East Connecting Link Daily Traffic Volume, January to July 2022



### Blue Mountain Resort Area Gateway

- High winter volume
- High winter weekday/weekend volume variation
- Traffic decline following March break
- Volume increases approaching summer months with notable peak on long weekends

### Blue Mountain Resort Area Gateway Daily Traffic Volume, January to July 2022



## 2. Collaboration and Coordination with MTO Staff

- Municipal staff in the South Georgian Bay area continue collaborating on shared transportation needs
  - A planned roundabout on the Simcoe County / Grey County border is a major project that has greatly benefitted from inter-municipal collaboration.
- First-ever joint Central and West Region meeting and two-day tour took place in June 2022 with MTO staff and municipal staff from Simcoe County, Grey County, Collingwood, Clearview, Meaford and The Blue Mountains
  - Opportunity to built relationships across numerous jurisdictions
  - Platform to share with MTO staff the transportation challenges, opportunities, and the collective story that is driving the need for regional transportation solutions
- **The Town requests that MTO Central and West Region strategies recognize the unique cross-jurisdiction challenges in the growing South Georgian Bay area.**



### 3. South Georgian Bay Regional Transportation Needs

Transportation planning at the local and regional level can address many of the transportation challenges that The Blue Mountains and other South Georgian Bay municipalities face. However, the potentially far-reaching implications of accommodating future Provincial highway capacity through Grey County and Simcoe County is a need that warrants Ministry leadership.

Transportation Plans completed by neighbouring municipalities are not well coordinated or linked. Visitors and residents expect an efficient and sustainable regional transportation network that functions **regardless of municipal boundaries**.

- **The Blue Mountains requests that MTO revisit the 2015 Highway 26 Needs Assessment Completed by the Ministry to:**
  - Explore benefits of new technology and data sources to enhance Highway 26 strategic planning
  - Assess and update Highway 26 regional by-passes opportunities
  - Consider proceeding with more detailed investigations such as the 2015 Study's identified Provincial Class Environmental Assessments
  - Consider enhancing the future role of active and public transportation in long-term planning within the region
- The goal of continuing to study Highway 26 capacity and major east-west traffic needs in the near-term would be to:
  - Identify and protect long term Provincial highway corridor needs in both Grey County and Simcoe County, including a regional Highway 26 by-pass option
  - Support municipal land-use and transportation planning
  - Engage with all relevant municipalities, residents and stakeholders in finding the most mutually beneficial solutions
  - Recognize that population growth of South Georgian Bay municipalities will likely make securing any potential land needs more challenging and costly over time.



# South Georgian Bay Regional Transportation Plan

- The development of a **South Georgian Bay Comprehensive Transportation Master Plan** is essential to the continued economic success of the region and will further support the Highway 26 Needs Study that was completed by the Ministry in 2015.
- Endorsement and participation from the Ministry to support and collaborate on the strategic planning process is vital as related to the Provincial Highway 26 corridor and regional economic interest.
- Engagement and participation from **all neighbouring** municipalities and both upper-tier levels of regional government will be required to ensure that the plan is meaningful and comprehensive.
- The goal of the regional plan would be to both encourage and support all municipalities and partners to work collaboratively to identify mutually beneficial solutions for vehicle and active leisure transportation. This will ensure that extensive engagement and consultation for development along the Highway 26 corridor is achieved.

# Summary - Requests for Consideration

1. The Town requests endorsement and participation from the Ministry of Transportation to support and collaborate on the South Georgian Bay Comprehensive Transportation Master Plan process.
2. The Town requests that MTO consider recommendations in the Town's final Transportation Master Plan that rely on MTO participation and leadership, and continue working with Town staff to find opportunities for improving Highway 26 within the Blue Mountains.
3. The Town requests that MTO Central and West Region strategies recognize the unique cross-jurisdiction challenges in the growing South Georgian Bay area.
4. The Blue Mountains requests that MTO revisit the 2015 Highway 26 Needs Assessment Completed by the Ministry to continue assessing highway corridor needs and by-pass options.



**Questions?**