

RECEIVED VIA EMAIL

April 4, 2021

**Subject: Long term plan for a bypass running from the Stayner area to Owen Sound**

We note that with the cooperation of local Mayors (in the area) and the provincial government the speed limit along HWY 26 has been reduced through the Craigeith area from 80 kph to 50 kph, which we are sure has had it's share of supporters and naysayers. It has been a welcome relief to local residents trying to access the Georgian trail and beach access points along the highway. Unfortunately, this is scheduled to end mid October and the speeds to revert to the 80 kph.

We have noted that there has been more focus from the town through various media and most seems to support maintaining the 50 kph speed through Craigeith and hopefully all the way to Thornbury.

This effort has been appreciated as we have noted that since the Covid 19 pandemic there is a lot more traffic in the area and that, like other efforts to social distance, there are still those who will always speed and thus cause accidents to occur. The increase in traffic appears to be a combination of people wanting to get out of Toronto and those who have moved up to their summer or weekend get-a-ways and are now working from home in this area. This trend will continue and thus heavier than expected traffic will continue to rise with the new developments in both Collingwood and Blue Mountains. The Craigeith area alone appears to have 1,000 plus new residences to be added over the next 4 to 5 years.

One day traffic studies being done as per the one for the proposed Aquavil development don't, in our opinion, take into consideration all the factors – they are just looking at the past volumes and adding factors which don't appear realistic for the eventual population growth which means a lot more traffic. All of which will mean the safety of those using the natural facilities in the area becomes more hazardous.

There has been a lot of discussion and EA's done to try and find alternatives for getting traffic from Barrie or Toronto to Collingwood, Blue Mountains, Meaford and Owen Sound. The current proposed provincial plan of expanding Poplar Side road to four lanes and going north at some point to join HWY 26 between Collingwood and Blue Mountains and over to Thornbury with a second bypass of Thornbury causes many problems for the areas concerned. The document prepared by the Town showing alternative routing south of the area is excellent and does show that there are other possibilities, thank you for this.

We are concerned that this long term plan to put in place a bypass is actually a short term plan because it is piecemeal at best. We know that an alternative has been proposed by The Town of Blue Mountains and support a plan being needed that will identify a route that runs east/west from around Stayner all the way to Owen Sound. There are lots of two lane roads that can provide access points such as Grey Rds 2, 7, 13, 124 ON, 6 ON to the various towns along the way as increases in traffic volumes occur. Why not create a four lane highway plan now that will provide the access that will be needed in the future or a two lane that is planned to become a 4 lane down the road with appropriate space to handle the width needed to accomplish this expansion? Unfortunately, proceeding on a piecemeal approach will cost more as the same sections of road will end up having turning lanes added here and there and then be widened from two to four or five lanes. This would be like watching what has happened in Toronto to the 403, 401, QEW where there have been constant changes made at tremendous costs.

The development in both Collingwood and Blue Mountains has increased significantly in the past couple of years and it appears that this will continue for a number of years to come which will add to a significant increase in traffic volumes.

The Town of Collingwood created a long term transportation study in August 2019 providing time frames and cost estimates for what the town expects they will need to handle these increases. Does Blue Mountains have a similar document?

As there appears to be a rapport between the Mayors of Collingwood and Blue Mountains, we request that the Town of Blue Mountains works with the Town of Collingwood (and potentially all the mayors from Stayner to Owen Sound) to reduce the road costs within their areas by pushing for the longer range all encompassing bypass. Most of the road expansion plans in Collingwood appear to be in place to provide quicker access to The Ski facilities in the Blue Mountain area.

Examples as follows:

- 1) Collingwood's transportation study indicates a cost of \$ 11.7 M to widen HWY 26 from Harbour Street W. to Grey Rd 21. If this stays as a requirement it will support the current EA for the 4 to 5 lane re-development of Hwy 26 from Grey Rd. 21 through to Thornbury.
- 2) The widening of Poplar Side Road from Hwy 26 east of Collingwood to somewhere between High Street or on to Osler Bluff Rd. for at least that cost if not double the amount allocated to 1 above.
- 3) The replacement of the bridge on Mountain Rd near the Wal Mart at a cost of \$ 8.3 M along with the widening of same from 10<sup>th</sup> line to Cambridge St. near Wal Mart. Does the bridge in need to be replaced? Why propose this when an additional cost to widen the balance of the Mountain Rd. from 10<sup>th</sup> line to Grey Rd. 21 where another water course would need to be negotiated. Would it not be more prudent to bring the 4 lane road up from Poplar side road up side Rd 10 or from farther south if the big picture was used to sweep the new bypass south of all the towns affected?
- 4) There is also the round about planned for the intersection at Grey Rd. 19, Grey Rd. 21 and Mountain Rd – Cost unknown.
- 5) The cost of providing further another round about in the area to handle the increased traffic at Hwy 26, Grey Rd 21 and Long Point Rd is also not known. This intersection is becoming more and more dangerous everyday and it does not appear that the addition of the Aquavil development is recommending the inclusion of a round about there. Why?

While driving around the areas of Collingwood and Blue Mountains it is obvious that the current road structure is inadequate to handle the current volume of traffic without taking into account the expected growth. One example is the addition of a turning lane along Poplar Side road just east of HWY 124. An example of a piece meal approach to solving a bigger problem. Another example is the repaving of Grey Rd. 19/Osler Bluff Road between Poplar Side Rd and Mountain Rd. If this is planned to be part of the widening of roads around Collingwood and Blue Mountains, why the interim step? The plan is in place to create a round about at the intersection of Mountain road and Osler Bluff Road as well so some of the work just done will be redundant shortly, yes?

The Collingwood Transportation Study of August 2019 states on page 7 that the Town “encourage the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to advance their planning for a new highway around Collingwood”. What can the whole area Stayner through to Owen Sound do to assist in seeing that this happens sooner than later?

The Town of Blue Mountains efforts to make it safer along the corridor between Collingwood and Thornbury are greatly appreciated but the bigger picture needs to be addressed now and pressure put on the Government of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to pursue a united plan within the whole area so that safety is the number one priority and keeping the trucks on a more sensible route would help reach that goal. The sweeping bypass may actually make it quicker for people heading past Collingwood/Blue Mountains to other towns along the way to Owen Sound and further afield.

Any comments about the above would be greatly appreciated. We are not trying to make more work but wish to emphasize the need (in our view) to keep the natural feel of the area along with the safety for residents and visitors.

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