



Rapid Transit

Environmental Assessment

**Phase 1
Public Consultation Meeting
April 5&6, 2006**

INFORMATION HANDOUT



Region of Waterloo

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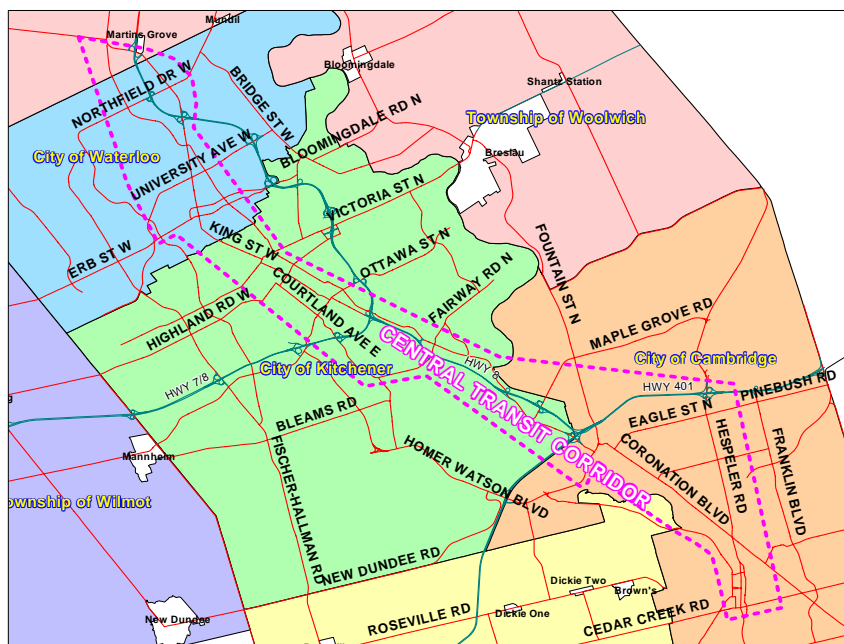
Purpose of this Public Consultation Meeting

The Region of Waterloo is carrying out an Individual Environmental Assessment for the development of Rapid Transit in the Region's Central Transit Corridor (please see Exhibit 1 below) that extends from Cambridge through Kitchener to Waterloo. The development of Rapid Transit in Waterloo Region is also included in the Province of Ontario's Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and is an important part of the Region of Waterloo's Regional Growth Management Strategy, a long-term strategic framework that identifies where, when and how future residential and employment growth will be accommodated.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment approved the Terms of Reference for this Rapid Transit Individual Environmental Assessment in July 2005. The Region of Waterloo is now moving forward with Phase 1 of the Environmental Assessment, the evaluation and selection of a preferred transportation system strategy.

Exhibit 1: Central Transit Corridor Map

The purpose of today's public meeting is to discuss how Rapid Transit (known as the "Undertaking" in the Environmental Assessment process) and three other strategic transportation alternatives – Baseline (do nothing), Road Improvement and Expansion and Improved Conventional Transit – meet the goals of the Regional Growth Management Strategy and contribute to the quality of life in the Region. Based on this evaluation, the project team has prepared a Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy.



The Project Team proposes that the Rapid Transit Initiative be carried forward to Phase 2 of the Environmental Assessment as the Draft Preferred Transportation

Public input is an essential and ongoing component of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment. A key purpose of this meeting is to seek public input on the Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy, provide the public with the opportunity to ask questions of the project team about Phase 1 and the Environmental Assessment process, and facilitate a public discussion about the evaluation process. At the conclusion of the Public Consultation process for Phase 1, feedback received will be considered, and a report will be presented to Regional Council proposing a Preferred Transportation Strategy for consideration.

Background

Waterloo Region is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. With a population of 500,000, and expected growth to 729,000 within the next 25 years, the Region is planning now for the challenges and opportunities associated with population and employment growth.

In 2003, Region of Waterloo Council unanimously adopted the Regional Growth Management Strategy, a long-term strategic framework that identifies where, when and how future residential and employment growth will be accommodated. The strategy is anchored on “growing by choice rather than by chance” and sets out strong and innovative policies for managing growth in urban areas and townships of the Region. A rapid transit service linking Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo with enhanced transit services to the townships is also a key component of the Regional Growth Management Strategy (www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rgms).

Rapid Transit is also a significant part of the Province’s Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Plan identifies the need for Rapid Transit in Waterloo Region, and recommends that priority funding be given to infrastructure projects that support an integrated regional transportation network for the movement of people and goods throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

On May 15, 2004, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and the Region of Waterloo jointly announced funding of up to \$2.5 million to complete the Regional Growth Management and Transit Initiative Technical Studies and an Individual Environmental Assessment. Prior to this announcement, the Region of Waterloo had been proceeding with various studies related to the Rapid Transit Initiative including the Central Transit Corridor Feasibility Study.

The Technical Studies, which included a detailed cost-benefit analysis, were completed in November 2005 and submitted to the Provincial and Federal governments. They concluded that Rapid Transit is a feasible transportation alternative and a strategic financial investment that supports the Region’s economy, competitiveness and prosperity over the next 30 years while meeting Provincial and Regional planning goals.

Rapid transit will help to reduce road congestion and negative impacts on air quality, protect our countryside and environmentally sensitive areas, address public health concerns, and promote vibrant urban spaces and downtown revitalization. It is seen as one of the key catalysts to ensuring our community’s vitality in the future by creating stronger linkages between how we travel and how our community develops.

What is the Rapid Transit Initiative?

The Region of Waterloo is proposing to develop a rapid transit system within the Central Transit Corridor identified in the Regional Growth Management Strategy (shown in Exhibit 1) and enhance conventional transit throughout the Region to provide residents of Waterloo Region with greater transportation choice, promote reurbanization and intensification, improve air quality and public health, provide a more balanced and integrated transportation system, and protect the rural countryside against urban population and expansion pressure.

The Terms of Reference for the Region of Waterloo Environmental Assessment defines the Rapid Transit Initiative as:

A proposed rapid transit system that is:

- Located within the primary reurbanization area around the Central Transit Corridor identified in the Regional Growth Management Strategy; and
- Connects the Region's downtown core areas.

It includes one or more proposed:

- Rapid transit technologies;
- Transit routes;
- Stations;
- Facilities to connect rapid transit with other transportation modes; and
- Maintenance and storage operations facilities.

For the Phase 1 assessment and evaluation, the Rapid Transit Initiative will include transportation operational improvements, enhancements to conventional transit and Transportation Demand Management measures, so that there is an equivalent comparison to the Alternatives.

Definition of Rapid Transit:

Rapid Transit is defined as a public transportation system operating for its entire length primarily on a dedicated transit lane. The definition includes systems operating at road level, and systems operating on elevated or underground facilities.

Rapid Transit involves new forms of transit service designed to increase travel speed, reliability, passenger comfort and convenience in order to be more competitive with car travel.

What is an Individual Environmental Assessment?

An Individual Environmental Assessment is a process used in Ontario to determine the potential impacts a project may have on the social, economic, cultural and natural environment so that the best possible decisions can be made for such projects. In July 2005, the Ontario Minister of the Environment approved the Terms of Reference for this Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment. The Terms of Reference provide the Region with binding approval on what must be addressed in its Environmental Assessment. This project is being carried out in accordance with the *Ontario Environmental Assessment Act* and will be coordinated within the requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

To view a copy of the Terms of Reference, please visit the Region’s website at www.region.waterloo.on.ca/transitea.

The Region of Waterloo Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment will proceed in three phases:

PHASE 1: ASSESSMENT OF THE RAPID TRANSIT INITIATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

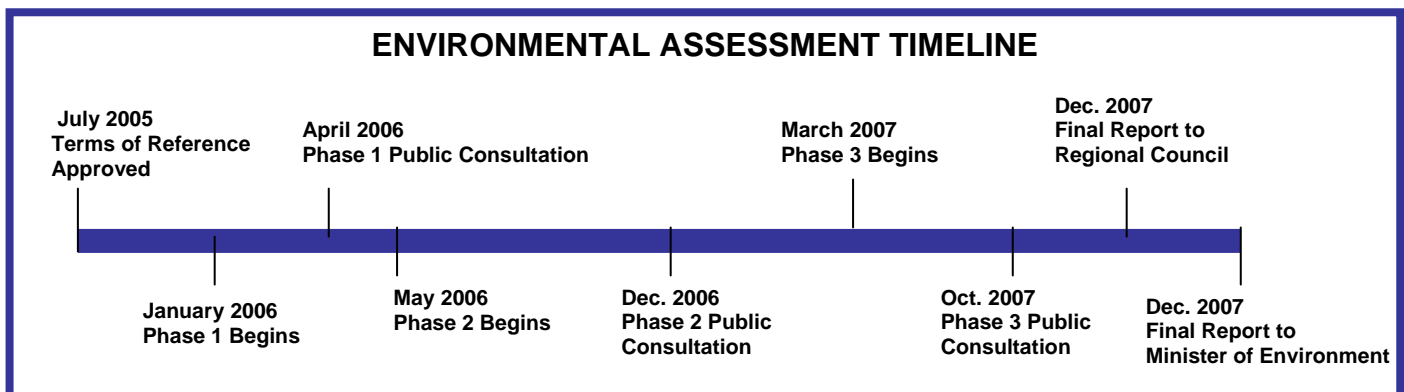
- This phase includes the selection of a Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy

PHASE 2: ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF CARRYING OUT THE PREFERRED TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

- Further benefits and costs of the transportation strategy will be evaluated
- Alternative technologies and route design will be screened and a preferred route and system identified

PHASE 3: ASSESSMENT OF THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF THE STRATEGY AND THE PREFERRED METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- All reasonable measures to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts of the selected routes and technologies will be considered



What is Phase 1?

The purpose of Phase 1 is to identify a preferred transportation strategy that best meets the goals set out in the Regional Growth Management Strategy.

This will provide residents of Waterloo Region with greater transportation choice and a more balanced and integrated transportation system, stimulate and support reurbanization, improve air quality and public health, and protect the rural countryside against urban population and expansion pressures, all of which are key goals of the Regional Growth Management Strategy.

The Ontario Environmental Assessment Act requires that the Region identify a proposed transportation strategy for assessment (Rapid Transit Initiative in Waterloo Region), and then consider alternative transportation systems in order to demonstrate there is a reasonable rationale for proceeding.

All comments and information collected during Phase 1 will be considered in developing a preferred draft transportation system strategy.

The Individual Environmental Assessment will assess and evaluate the proposed Rapid Transit Initiative against three alternative transportation strategies. **Since each is a broad strategy, no specific components such as routes or specific features will be identified in Phase 1 of the Environmental Assessment process.**

BASELINE ALTERNATIVE

The Baseline Alternative includes continuing with suburban growth throughout the Region to meet the forecasted 729,000 population level (2031) as identified by the Province in the Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Features of this transportation strategy are:

- Mainly suburban growth with little reurbanization of the built up areas of the three urban centres and the townships;
- Minimal transportation system improvements including little change to the conventional transit (bus routes) system except for express bus service and no rapid transit in the Central Transit Corridor. There will be some roadway expansion but it will be limited to suburban areas where growth will occur;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies and programs that can influence how, when and where people travel will be implemented to limit the growth of single occupant vehicle traffic. These would include promoting alternative transportation modes such as cycling and walking. These programs would be limited in scope with the Baseline Alternative, however, as a high reliance on single occupant vehicle travel is expected.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION ALTERNATIVE

The Road Improvement and Expansion Alternative also includes continuing with suburban growth to meet the forecasted 729,000 population level (2031) as identified by the Province in the Places to Grow Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Its main features are:

- Mainly suburban growth with little reurbanization of the built up areas of the three urban centres and the townships;
- Significant transportation system improvements including widening existing roads and expanding new roads into the undeveloped greenfields areas where most growth will occur. There will be no road expansion in the Central Transit Corridor;
- Minimal expansion of conventional transit service (bus routes) except for express bus route in the Central Transit Corridor;

- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies and programs that can influence how, when and where people travel will be implemented to limit the growth of single occupant vehicle traffic. These would include promoting alternative transportation modes such as cycling and walking mainly within the suburban road network (e.g. cycle lanes). These programs would be limited in scope with this Alternative, however, as a high reliance on single occupant vehicle travel is expected.

IMPROVED CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT ALTERNATIVE

The Improved Conventional Transit Alternative includes continuing with some suburban growth and encouraging reurbanization in the three urban centres including the townships in order to meet the forecasted 729,000 population level (2031) as identified by the province in the Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Its main features are:

- A mix of targeted greenfield development and some land use intensification in particular in the Central Transit Corridor;
- Moderate transportation system improvements with emphasis on improving local bus service throughout the three urban centres and the townships. New express bus service will be implemented within the Central Transit Corridor with operational improvements and bus priority (e.g. bus lanes) targeted to enhance transit service levels;
- Some suburban expansion will have targeted roadway enhancements and added road capacity;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies and programs are intended to limit the growth of single occupant vehicle traffic and can influence how, when and where people travel especially using alternative modes such as cycling and walking. Such programs associated with improving conventional transit service will include transit priority systems and facilities such as high occupancy vehicle lanes to allow buses priority over automobiles, encouraging community designs in greenfield locations that support transit use, and improving street designs to better integrate cycling and walking along transit routes in the Central Transit Corridor.

Goals and Criteria for Assessing Alternatives

The Rapid Transit Initiative and each of the Alternatives have been assessed based on their capacity to meet a broad range of goals. These goals have been derived from the extensive public process to create the Regional Growth Management Strategy. The specific goals and criteria are shown in **Exhibit 2**.

Exhibit 2 – Goals & Criteria for Assessing Alternatives to the Undertaking

Regional Growth Management Strategy Goals	Environmental Assessment Evaluation Criteria
Enhance Our Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relative amount of land consumed 2. Relative impact on air quality 3. Relative impact of emissions contributing to climate change
Build Vibrant Urban Places	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Relative contribution to Region reurbanization objectives 5. Relative contribution to innovative urban design 6. Relative contribution to public health
Provide Greater Transportation Choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Relative contribution to increased transportation choice 8. Relative contribution to increased Region transit ridership 9. Relative affordability of personal transportation cost 10. Relative flexibility to changes in operation
Protect Our Countryside	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Relative contribution to the Region’s countryside protection goal
Foster a Strong Economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Relative contribution to downtown revitalization 13. Relative capital cost to the Region
Ensure Overall Coordination & Cooperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Degree of compatibility with other Regional plans and strategies 15. Degree of compatibility with provincial and federal plans and strategies

How were the Rapid Transit Initiative and Alternatives evaluated?

The Phase 1 evaluation process compares the Rapid Transit Initiative to the three transportation Alternatives defined in the Terms of Reference, and:

- Explains why the criteria are important;
- Describes how the criteria relate to the Regional Growth Management Strategy;
- Notes existing policies that relate to the criteria,
- Applies ratings to each alternative strategies and the Rapid Transit Undertaking on how each responds to the criteria; and
- Concludes with a statement rating how the Alternative strategies and Undertaking respond to the criteria.

Exhibit 3 shows a summary of these results and indicates which transportation strategy was most responsive to the criteria.

Based on these results, the Project Team has developed a preferred draft transportation system strategy. The rationale for this proposal is summarized in **Exhibit 4, Summary of Evaluation**, which has been provided to you as an attachment to this Information Handout.

Exhibit 3 – Summary Rating Results

Criterion	Baseline	Road Improvement & Expansion	Improved Conventional Transit	Rapid Transit
RGMS Goal – Enhance Our Environment				
1. Relative Amount of Land Consumed	○	○	◐	◑
2. Relative Impact on Air Quality	○	◐	◑	●
3. Relative Impact of Emissions Generated	○	○	◐	●
RGMS Goal – Build Vibrant Urban Places				
4. Relative Contribution to Region’s Reurbanization Objectives	○	○	◐	●
5. Relative Contribution to Innovative Urban Design	◐	◐	◑	●
6. Relative Contribution to Public Health	○	○	◐	●
RGMS Goal – Provide Greater Transportation Choice				
7. Relative Contribution to Increased Transportation Choice	◐	◐	◑	●
8. Relative Contribution to Increased Regional Transit Ridership	○	○	◐	●
9. Relative Affordability of Personal Transportation Cost	○	○	◑	●
10. Relative Flexibility to Changes in Operation	○	◑	●	◐
RGMS Goal – Protect Our Countryside				
11. Relative Contribution to Region’s Countryside Protection Goal	○	○	◐	●
RGMS Goal – Foster a Strong Economy				
12. Relative Contribution to Downtown Revitalization	○	○	◐	●
13. Relative (Infrastructure) Capital Cost to the Region	◑	◐	◐	◑
RGMS Goal – Ensure Overall Coordination and Cooperation				
14. Degree of Compatibility with Provincial & Federal Plans & Strategies	○	○	◐	●
15. Degree of Compatibility with Regional/Municipal Plans & Strategies	○	◐	◐	●

Ratings:

○	◐	◑	●
Most / least responsive to criterion	Least Effective Response	Medium Response	Most Positive Response

The rationale for these results is summarized in [Exhibit 4, Summary of Evaluation](#), which will be provided as a separate attachment with this Handout.

Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy

The Project Team evaluated the Rapid Transit Initiative (also known as the Undertaking in the Environmental Assessment process) and three Alternatives by applying the criteria noted in Exhibit 2 (located on Page 9) to determine the potential of the Rapid Transit Initiative and the Alternatives to meet the Regional Growth Management Strategy Goals.

This evaluation process is referred to as a “balanced reasoned argument approach” and it is a commonly used tool during an Environmental Assessment process. Using this approach, the Project Team reviewed the available research, data and literature to determine if the Rapid Transit Initiative and each Alternative met the goals outlined in the 15 criteria.

The results of the evaluation conducted during Phase 1 determined that the Rapid Transit Initiative had the most positive response over the three Alternatives in 13 of the 15 evaluation criteria. It is the preferred transportation system for Waterloo Region, predominantly for the following reasons:

- Best achieves the goals of the Regional Growth Management Strategy;
- Is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conforms with the Provincial Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- Supports reurbanization objectives, downtown revitalization and innovative urban design;
- Increases transportation choice and transit ridership;
- Is the least expensive form of motorized transportation when considering personal transportation costs;
- Contributes to the Region’s countryside protection goal by facilitating reurbanization and reducing the pressure to expand urban boundaries;
- Provides a safe mode of transportation and promotes an active and healthier lifestyle;
- and
- Utilizes the least amount of land and minimizes the impact on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

It is also proposed that a comprehensive package of planning initiatives, including new land use policies, be developed within the Region’s Central Transit Corridor to support Rapid Transit. These may include targeted road improvements, parking supply and cost policies, and other Transportation Demand Management measures.

Why were the Alternatives NOT chosen as the Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy?

Improved Conventional Transit: The Improved Conventional Transit Alternative received the most positive response in one of the 15 evaluation criteria.

- Has the most operational flexibility for adjusting routes, schedules and service levels (e.g. priority lanes) to meet growing demands; and
- Would have lower upfront capital cost.

This Alternative was not selected because:

- Ridership growth is limited over the longer term by slower and longer travel times related to lower density development and congested roads;
- It results in higher emission levels, more land consumption and pressure on the countryside line;
- There is limited ability to stimulate intensification according to the requirements of the Province's Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan; and
- Additional bus fleet and road expansion will be needed over time as congestion increases and transit service levels are compromised, thereby reducing the effectiveness of conventional transit.

Baseline and Road Improvement and Expansion: Baseline received the most positive response in one evaluation, capital cost. The Road Improvement and Expansion Alternative did not respond most positively in any of the criteria.

These Alternatives were not selected because they:

- Are not consistent with Regional Growth Management Strategy goals and does not conform with Provincial Policy Statement and Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and
- Would have significant negative impacts on the natural and social environments over the long term.

Provide Your Input!

The Region of Waterloo requests input from the public on the questions offered on the attached Comment Sheet. All comments and information collected during Phase 1 will be considered during the finalization of a recommended transportation strategy.

What Happens Next?

The project team will review all public and agency input received at this Public Meeting, and over the following weeks leading up to the **April 28, 2006** deadline for submission of comments. During this review, the project team may also contact and respond to agencies, stakeholders and individuals wishing to discuss any aspect of the Phase 1 evaluation and comment on the Draft Preferred Transportation Strategy.

At the conclusion of the Public Consultation process for Phase 1, the Project Team will present the Preferred Transportation Strategy to Regional Council for consideration and additional public comment.

Should Regional Council approve the Preferred Transportation Strategy, Phase 2 of the Environmental Assessment will begin with a study of the benefits and costs of Rapid Transit for our community. Phase 2 will include additional opportunities for public input and involvement. (Please see the [Environmental Assessment Timeline](#) on Page 4).

How Do I Stay Informed?

Public consultation is a critical and ongoing part of the Environmental Assessment Process. The approved Terms of Reference and other study information is available on the Region's website at www.region.waterloo.on.ca/transitea. The website will be updated regularly with information and notice of future public consultation events. If you would like to have your name added to the project mailing list, please **use the sign-up feature, eConnect, on our website**, or provide your name, postal address, e-mail address and any group affiliation to either:

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**Tear Off and Deposit in
Comment Box**

COMMENT SHEET

Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment (EA)

Phase One

Public Meeting
April 5&6, 2006

Please complete and hand in this Comment Sheet in the Comment Box so your views can be considered during the finalization of the preferred transportation strategy for Waterloo Region. If you wish to prepare your comments later, please mail, fax or e-mail your comments no later than **April 28, 2006** to:

Mr. David Durant, P. Eng.
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1. Looking ahead 25 years and considering that the population of the Region could grow to 730,000 along with significant employment growth:

What, in your view, are the advantages and disadvantages of the various transportation alternatives (Rapid Transit and the three Alternatives) in helping us meet our future growth and transportation needs?

Baseline:

Road Improvement and Expansion:

Improved Conventional Transit:

Rapid Transit:

2. Which transportation strategy, in your view, has the greatest potential of meeting the Regional Growth Management Strategy goals? (Enhance Our Environment, Build Vibrant Urban Places, Provide Greater Transportation Choice, Protect Our Countryside, Foster a Strong Economy, Ensure Overall Coordination and Cooperation)

Please tell us why you feel this way.

3. The Project Team is recommending that Rapid Transit is the Preferred Transportation Strategy and should continue into Phase 2 of the Environmental Assessment process for further study of the benefits and costs for our community.

Do you agree with this recommendation?
(Please indicate with a checkmark)

Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure _____

Please tell us why you think this way.

4. What other comments do you have on Phase 1 of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment?

5. How would you like to be kept informed about the progress of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment?

Other Comments:

How did you find out about this meeting? _____

Your name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for your input.

COLLECTION NOTICE: All comments and information received from the public, stakeholder groups and agencies regarding the EA project are being collected to assist the Region in meeting the requirements of the OEAA and CEAS. Under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Environmental Assessment Act*, unless otherwise stated in the submission, any personal information such as name, address, telephone number and property location included in the submission from the public will become part of the public record files for this matter and can be released, if requested, to any person.