



## STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

### Kirkhams Road Bridge over the Rouge River Class Environmental Assessment Study - Update

<b>Date:</b>	March 20, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Transportation Services
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 42 Scarborough – Rouge River
<b>Reference Number:</b>	p:\2008\ClusterB\tra\tim\pw08005tim

#### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides the details of further meetings which took place between Transportation Services Division staff, the residents of Kirkhams Road and the Ward Councillor regarding the “Kirkhams Road Bridge over the Rouge River” Class Environmental Assessment Study. While it is believed that these meetings have resulted in a better appreciation for the issues on both sides, the Transportation Services Division does not propose any modifications to the conclusions and recommendations of the Class EA Study at this time.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There are no financial impacts arising from the receipt of this report. The financial impacts associated with the proposed removal of the Kirkhams Road Bridge are described in the Staff Report (August 14, 2007) from the General Manager, Transportation Services.

#### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on October 31, 2007, in considering a report (August 14, 2007) from the General Manager, Transportation Services on the Kirkhams Road Bridge over the Rouge River Class EA Study, the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee deferred consideration of this matter to its meeting of January 9, 2008, and requested the General Manager of Transportation Services to have further discussions with the Ward Councillor and local residents to address their concerns, and to report the outcome of these discussions to the meeting of January 9, 2008. Subsequently, the General Manager,

Transportation Services requested a further deferral to April 9, 2008, to allow these discussions to continue.

The report and decision document can be viewed at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pw/decisions/2007-10-31-pw10-dd.pdf>

## **COMMENTS**

Transportation Services staff have held three meetings with the residents of Kirkhams Road and the Ward Councillor over the fall/winter of 2007-08. On October 19, 2007 a site meeting was held at the Kirkhams Road Bridge, also attended by staff from Fire Services and the Toronto Zoo. On November 15, 2007 and February 11, 2008 Transportation Services staff met with residents, the Ward Councillor and Toronto Zoo staff at the Zoo administrative offices. The issues discussed at these meetings are described below.

### **The Beare Road Landfill (Ski hill trust fund):**

Residents suggested that tipping fees collected at the former Beare Road Landfill were to be used for the maintenance of Kirkhams Road and the bridge as well as to build a ski hill as part as the landfill rehabilitation. Residents asked what happened to the ski hill funds and why they had not been used for the bridge.

Investigation into this issue with Solid Waste Management staff did not find any information or evidence regarding funds reserved for repairs to the Kirkhams Road Bridge. Prior to the opening of Meadowvale Road, Kirkhams Road was the main access route to the landfill and the road was widened and paved as a result. The landfill operated from 1967 to 1988 and the main landfill route became Meadowvale Road when that road opened in 1974.

The former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto undertook preliminary work on the ski facility before abandoning the project when it was deemed to not be viable and not a compatible land use with the newly formed Rouge Park. Approximately \$220,000 was spent from 1984 to 1988 on utility work and studies associated with the Beare Road ski facility. Information provided by Corporate Finance staff indicates that funds from the Beare Road Ski Facility Trust Fund have been used to acquire park land or park-related elements as well as trail and vegetation management in the Scarborough District. There is approximately \$611,000 left in the fund. While it is technically possible for Transportation Services to apply to use these funds for the maintenance of the bridge, this has not been the typical use for these funds and would require specific approval from City Council.

**Watermain** (installation of new watermain under river):

Residents expressed concern that the estimated cost of the watermain relocation, as stated in the environmental study report (ESR), is greatly under-estimated and the watermain work will require a separate EA which will cost more money and take seven years to complete.

The estimated cost of the watermain has been validated by our technical consultant for the Class EA Study, Totten, Sims, Hubicki & Associates (TSH). Staff from Toronto Water and the Technical Services Division have also determined the estimated cost to be reasonable based on their own preliminary estimate and experience in similar circumstances. In addition, the watermain work is part of the Kirkhams Road Bridge Class EA Study and, accordingly, a separate EA study is not required.

**Review of Environmental Study** (by a third-party):

Residents are concerned that the City picked the bridge removal option before completing the Class EA study and believe the ESR should be reviewed by an independent third party at the City's expense.

The Kirkhams Road residents have interpreted text in the ESR to mean that the decision to remove the Kirkhams Road Bridge was made by Transportation Services staff prior to completing the mandatory procedures and public consultation under the Class EA process. While it is understood how this interpretation could be made, this is only an issue with the text in the ESR, and not with the procedures followed by Transportation Services staff in the conduct of the Class EA study.

Documentation was provided, and is included in the ESR, to show that the decision-making process was open and traceable, and that comments from review agencies and the public were solicited broadly, with no attempt to direct or coerce individuals or groups. If the residents still have concerns, there is still the opportunity to express these concerns to the Minister of the Environment during the 30-day public review period, should City Council endorse the recommended project.

**Repair existing bridge to a lower weight load requirement** (not to current Bridge Code Standards):

The residents have stated the bridge can be made safe with minimum repairs and the bridge structure can be used as a load-restricted, one-lane bridge. They provided examples of other one-lane bridges in the area. The basic rationale for this approach is to create a bridge rehabilitation option which is less expensive than the bridge removal option.

In 2006, Technical Services Division staff undertook a more detailed review and analysis of the feasibility of re-opening the bridge with one lane of traffic. Transportation

Services staff responded to the residents by letter dated May 24, 2006 with the results of this review. Such a bridge would not be able to support fire trucks, garbage trucks or a snow plough; therefore a cul-de-sac would be required at each end. The marginal cost for rehabilitation of a two-lane bridge versus a one-lane bridge (with cul-de-sacs) is not significant and a two-lane bridge is a safer option at this location given the limited sight lines and grade differences on Kirkhams Road. In addition, creating a load restricted bridge would create a liability for the City as there would be no way to prevent heavy vehicles from using it. Finally, it is Transportation Services' position that the cost difference between removing and rehabilitating the bridge is not significant and was not a deciding factor in this case.

### **Toronto Fire Services (TFS) Comments**

Residents claim that TFS have been coerced or coached into concluding that removing the bridge is the best option.

As was stated above, Transportation Services staff have not attempted to coach any individual or group through the course of the Class EA Study. TFS was sent the same Notice of Study Commencement as all other review agencies. A letter from TFS to Transportation Services, dated October 30, 2007, stated it is always preferable for Fire Services to have multiple access routes to any area, however, in this case, they can still maintain service delivery as mandated by City Council with only the north access to Kirkhams Road.

### **Maintenance History of Kirkhams Road Bridge**

Residents feel the Borough of Scarborough and the City of Toronto have neglected Kirkhams Road resulting in the bridge being in far worse condition than it should be. They would like to examine the maintenance records for the bridge.

Technical Services Division staff have been unable to locate bridge maintenance records for the period prior to 2003. Notwithstanding, it was inevitable that the deck structure of the Kirkhams Road bridge would have to be completely replaced at some time, as is the case for all other roadway bridges. Therefore, the decision of whether to rehabilitate the bridge or not, would also, inevitably have to be made, regardless of past maintenance activities. It is recognized, however, that had extensive maintenance been undertaken, it may have been possible to have deferred the rehabilitation of the bridge for a few years.

Regarding the remainder of Kirkhams Road, Transportation Services Road Operations staff patrol Kirkhams Road monthly as per Minimum Maintenance Standards (Reg.239/02). During 2007, Road Operations staff completed ditching work, culvert replacement, pot hole repairs, maintained the closure signage and removed illegally dumped debris. In 2008 fence repairs and catch basin adjustments are planned.

## **Toronto Zoo Traffic Concerns**

The residents have advised that traffic accessing the Zoo prevents residents from getting home in a timely manner and sometimes they are in line for an hour before they can turn onto Kirkhams Road. They are concerned that this could pose a serious problem in emergency situations.

The Zoo has implemented some parking improvements to streamline the parking process. A new pay and display system for the main parking lot (Lot 1) was implemented last year which allows vehicles to enter the parking lot without having to stop at an attendant's booth. This has helped to minimize the queue of vehicles waiting to access the parking lot. This pay and display system will be operating in Lot 2 this year, which should improve the traffic situation once Lot 1 is full. Transportation Services staff met with Zoo staff to review potential traffic improvements that would not conflict with their parking operation strategy. One such improvement would be to pave Lot 2, which is currently a granular surface without designated parking spaces. However, the cost of this improvement is well over \$500,000 and it is unknown at this time what benefits the new pay and display system will realize. Therefore, at this time it is recommended that Transportation Services will continue to monitor traffic operations during peak operating times at the Zoo.

## **Historical concerns**

Residents feel the bridge has historical significance as there has always been a river crossing in this location.

The Heritage Bridges Identification and Assessment Guide Ontario 1945 – 1965 (2005) provides assistance in the conservation of heritage bridges built in the latter part of the twentieth century. The present Kirkhams Road bridge has been evaluated using the criteria therein, and was not found to fulfil the requirements of the Guide. In addition, the City's Heritage Preservation Services staff have indicated the bridge does not have a sufficient heritage value, and therefore they do not have any objection to its removal.

## **Fishery and Watercourse Concerns**

Residents feel the existing bridge is beneficial to fish habitat as it provides shade for fish and that short-term construction to remove the bridge would be detrimental to aquatic habitat.

The Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) was a member of this study's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and participated in developing the alternatives and evaluating them. The TRCA has no objection, in principle, to the Preferred Design Concept. They look to ensure that any alternative will not impact aquatic or terrestrial habitat, the control of flooding, or natural stream processes. With any alternative it would need to be demonstrated that any negative impacts to the environment are avoided or adequately mitigated, and that the alternative is justified based on potential impacts.

Should the bridge be replaced or altered, it is TRCA's preliminary opinion that the required span of a new structure may potentially be in the range of three times the span of the current structure to allow for the conveyance of flood waters, channel migration and restoration of the valley. The rehabilitation of the current structure would have less impact on the environment in the short term; however the removal of the bridge and restoration of the valley system would provide the greatest potential for the enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

Generally, shade is beneficial to fish habitat and the existing bridge does provide shade. However, if the bridge were removed, the planting of trees and shrubs would provide far better quality shade. Such vegetation would also provide food (insects that drop into the creek) and organic matter (food for things that fish eat) that would better support the fish population.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The additional meetings held with the residents of Kirkhams Road have resulted in a better understanding of the issues on both sides. The proposed removal of the Kirkhams Road bridge will impact accessibility for the residents. Although generally the capacity to access Kirkhams Road will not be an issue, the full impact of parking improvements at the Toronto Zoo are not yet known. Overall, the longer-term environmental benefits of removing the bridge are still valid, and emergency access to Kirkhams Road is considered adequate. On this basis, no changes are proposed to the Transportation Services Division's original recommendation in the "Kirkhams Road Bridge over the Rouge River" Class EA Study.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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