DEPUTATION NOTES FOR ITEM PW29.2 - Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard East Reconfiguration Environment Assessment (EA) and Integrated Urban Design Study of the Public Works & Infrastructure Committee.

The Toronto Industry Network (TIN) cannot support the staff recommendation to remove the easterly portion of the Gardiner for the following reasons:

- The teardown will affect Toronto's ability to compete. Mobility is an essential component of competitiveness. Many of Toronto's manufacturers operate just-in-time. Time wasted is money lost.
- The City requires a balanced transportation system that allows the efficient movement of people and goods. A 5-10 minute penalty for trucks transiting the Gardiner adds up to a lot of money that companies have to recover elsewhere to keep their pricing competitive. Quality of life is important for those driving to work in employment areas.
- The Gardiner runs at capacity during peak times. The 40% reduction of traffic capacity resulting from tearing down the easterly portion of the Gardiner coupled with the elimination of one lane each on Richmond and Adelaide streets for bike lanes will greatly affect traffic flows in the downtown.
- The green arguments supporting the tear-down option are weak. For example, traffic that is running smoothly without stopping is less polluting than stop-and-start traffic. This change will result in increased fuel consumption along with increases in GHG emissions.
- Unlike many other cities, Toronto is fortunate to have a ring road (Gardiner-Don Valley-401 & 427) that provides good access. The staff report does not address the impact of reducing Gardiner corridor volumes on the traffic volumes of these other highways that run at capacity during peak times.
- On February 17, Florida Governor Rick Scott announced state funding to accelerate the construction of an elevated toll expressway to top of existing roads linking I-275 and US19 as well as the Clearwater airport. He said, “This (expressway) will make roads safe, and allow families to spend more time together and less time sitting in traffic. The Gateway Express Project will also allow economic activity to continue to grow and develop in Pinellas County, which will create jobs and opportunities for Florida families.” County Commissioner Karen Steel added, “...The Gateway area is centric for job retention and growth. And it connects this major employment area to St. Petersburg, Clearwater and to Westshore in Tampa. This has been the single largest missing piece for our roadway network within Pinellas County.” (Please see attachment.)
Governor Scott Announces Advancement of Gateway Express Project in Pinellas County

On February 17, 2014, in News Release by Staff

Governor Rick Scott today announced the advancement of the Gateway Express project, a direct connection from I-275 to US 19 and from I-275 to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport and the Bayside Bridge via an elevated tolled expressway. Through Governor Scott’s investments in the Transportation Work Plan of more than $131 million in state funding the Department of Transportation will be able to speed up the project allowing the road to open 20 years sooner than previously expected. The project will address the growing transportation needs in the Greater Pinellas Gateway area by constructing the 118th Ave. and S.R. 686 corridors as one single design/build project.

Governor Scott said, “With this $131 million commitment we will be able to speed up this critical project. This will make roads safer and allow families to spend more time together and less time sitting in traffic. The Gateway Express Project will also allow economic activity to continue to grow and develop in Pinellas County, which will create jobs and opportunities for Florida families.”

An expressway option will better serve the community by providing faster travel times and by providing revenue to cover future maintenance and operating costs. A toll-free option will remain available on the existing road network therefore giving drivers a choice. Motorists will be able to travel from US 19 or from the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Airport to I-275 without stopping at any signals. The potential time savings is from nine to 13 minutes during the morning and afternoon commute.

“This is the most significant capital improvement in Pinellas since the overpass of US-19,” stated Senator Jeff Braden (R-St. Petersburg). “This project will allow for seamless travel between north and south Pinellas and will significantly ease traffic congestion. These types of projects are what we need to prioritize in order to keep Pinellas moving in the right direction.”

Representative Larry Ahern said, “This project will help relieve traffic congestion and provide options for area motorists. Travelers will have the choice of using the new toll road or continue driving on the existing toll-free network of roadways. Most importantly, this provides solutions that benefit our area’s economic future.”

Representative Ed Hooper said, “I know this project has been high on the county’s list and anything we can do to help the mobility for the residents of Pinellas County is greatly appreciated. This allows additional options for our constituents and I support it 100%.”

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretary Ananth Prasad said, “Originally broken out as five separate projects, combining them into one as a managed lane project will advance these corridor improvements by approximately 20 years.”

David Bennett, President and CEO, Pinellas Realtor Organization, said, “We are happy to hear about this exciting new project coming to Pinellas County. The expressway is more than a transportation project; it is an economic development project. It is another way to connect businesses with customers and employees. We thank the Governor for his leadership and hope to continue working with him on future transit-oriented projects.”

Pinellas County Commissioner Karen Seel said, “I am very pleased and thankful for this announcement. It is the largest remaining road connectivity project in Pinellas County. The Gateway area is central for job retention and growth. And it connects this major employment area to St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and to Westshore in Tampa. This has been the single largest missing piece for our roadway network within Pinellas County. We are thrilled.”

Pinellas County Commissioner Norm Roche said, “I support the project. Pinellas is unique in our current state of built-out sprawl development. Unrestricted travel is essential as we go about our diverse day-to-day lives here. Notwithstanding the frustration that road construction can bring with it, our roadway system is really quite functional, and this project will build upon our road for flexibility in our daily travels.”

Rick Baker, Former Mayor of St. Pete, said, “This is a project the community has been working on for over 15 years. I believe this is one of the most important announcements in our history that will link north and south Pinellas County.”

FDOT is partnering with Pinellas County on this project. Funding includes federal, state and Penny for Pinellas funds. The project, estimated to cost nearly $338 million, would start construction in early 2017.