

Update on the Working Group to Advance the Widening of Steeles Avenue East Between Ninth Line and Beare Road to Support Regional Growth

Date: November 20, 2025

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: Acting General Manager, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 25 - Scarborough - Rouge Park

SUMMARY

At its October 9 and 10, 2024 meeting, City Council requested the City Manager to establish a working group with representatives from the City of Toronto and various municipalities and agencies to advance the widening of Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road. This report provides an update as requested by Council on the working group process and next steps for future work on this section of Steeles Avenue East.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its October 9 and 10, 2024 meeting, City Council requested the City Manager to establish a working group with representatives from the City of Pickering, the City of

Markham, Parks Canada, and Metrolinx, to review the 1993 provincially approved Environmental Assessment that studied the widening of Steeles Avenue East, explore the potential to advance rapid surface transit and develop an inter-regional approach to widening Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road and identify potential funding sources.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE16.9>

COMMENTS

Between Ninth Line and Beare Road, Steeles Avenue East is a minor arterial road and a critical link between east Scarborough, York Region, and Durham Region. As a boundary road between the City of Toronto and the City of Markham within York Region, any plans for this City of Toronto right-of-way need to be considered through inter-regional collaboration.

This report contains:

- 1) Background on the History of Widening Steeles Avenue East;
- 2) Status of Steeles Avenue as a Higher Order Transit Connection;
- 3) Summary of Working Group Process and Discussions; and
- 4) Next Steps.

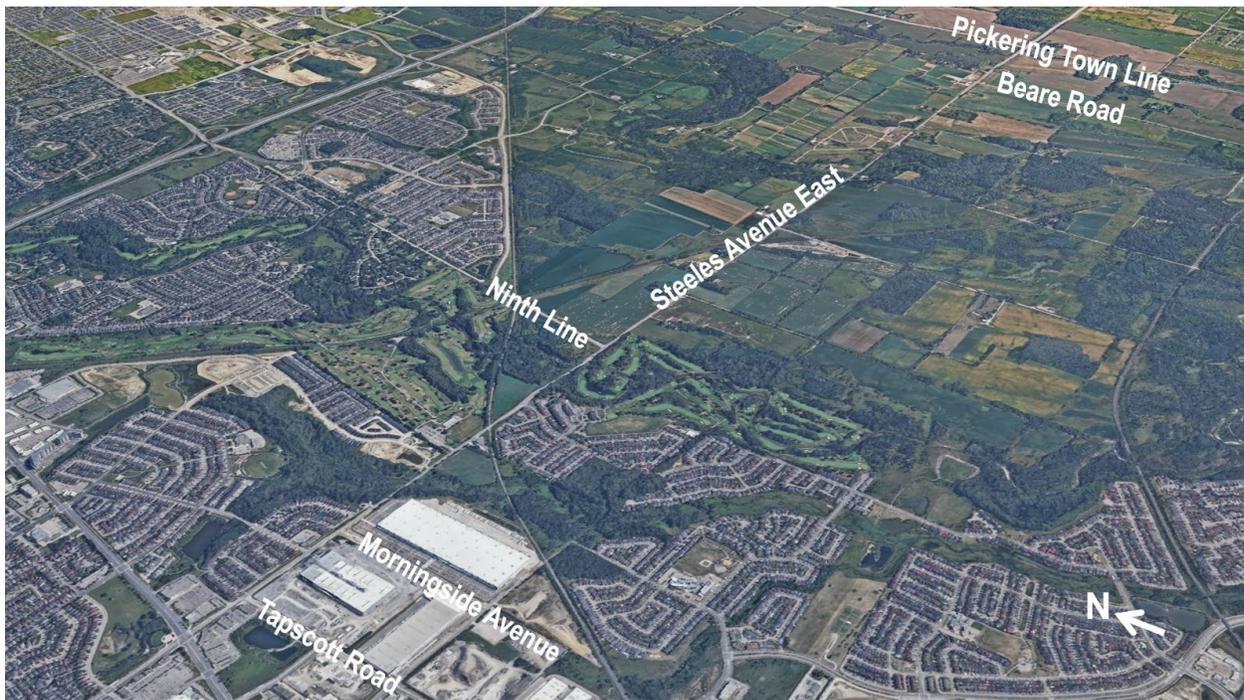


Figure 1: Steeles Avenue East from Tapscott Road to Beare Road

1) Background on the History of Widening Steeles Avenue East

Identification of the need to widen Steeles Avenue East in the eastern area of Toronto began in the late 1980s. In 1988, the Ministry of Transportation undertook a strategic transportation study - the "Highway 407 Overview Study" - prompted by the need to assess existing and future transportation requirements in east Toronto and York and

Steeles Avenue East (Ninth Line to Beare Road) Working Group

Durham Regions between Highway 401 and Highway 7. This work generally identified the need to upgrade City of Toronto, York Region, and Durham Region road infrastructure, including Steeles Avenue East between McCowan Road and Pickering Town Line. The Province committed funding to widen Steeles Avenue East between McCowan Road and Pickering Town Line in 1990, recognizing its inter-regional function for the City of Toronto, Pickering, and Markham.

In 1992, Metro Toronto completed the Steeles Avenue Widening: McCowan Road to Pickering Townline Class Environmental Assessment Environmental Assessment (EA), that studied the widening of Steeles Avenue East from two to four vehicular lanes. This EA was approved by the Province in late 1993, after prolonged discussions with concerned interest groups. Detailed design and construction followed from this, with two segments of Steeles Avenue East widened to four lanes: McCowan Road to Tapscott Road and Beare Road to Pickering Town Line, leaving a two-lane segment in the middle, between Tapscott Road and Beare Road (see Attachment 1). In 1996, the Provincial government in place at the time withdrew its funding commitment for the remaining Steeles Avenue East widening work (Tapscott Road to Beare Road), and therefore detailed design and construction of the segment between Tapscott Road and Beare Road did not proceed.

In 2011, York Region completed the Transportation Improvements: Donald Cousens Parkway to Morningside Avenue Link (formerly Transportation Improvements in the Markham Bypass Corridor South of Highway 407) EA, which included a widening of Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road to Ninth Line from two to six lanes, as well as north-south connections via the widening of Ninth Line north of Steeles Avenue East and an extension of Morningside Avenue south of Steeles Avenue, connecting to McNicoll Avenue. The Province issued its approval of this EA in January 2013.

In 2014, City Council gave City staff the authority to enter into discussions with York Region related to cost-sharing for the Steeles Avenue East widening associated with the 2013 provincially approved EA. The City of Toronto and York Region agreed to cost share (50/50), with the City responsible for leading design and construction of Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road and Ninth Line, as well as Morningside Avenue. In 2016, the City procured design services for the Steeles Avenue East widening and the Morningside Avenue extension. The northerly portion of Morningside Avenue, from Steeles Avenue East to Passmore Avenue, was designed and built through adjacent landowners, and opened in 2023.

The City of Toronto is continuing to advance design work for Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road to Ninth Line, as well as Morningside Avenue between Passmore Avenue and McNicoll Avenue. Updates to the Steeles Avenue East design to minimize property acquisition and integrate current design standards for lane width and green infrastructure resumed in early 2024 and a Preliminary Design Report is targeted for early 2026.

Review of the Steeles Avenue East Environmental Assessment (1993)

In response to Council's direction to review the 1993 Provincially approved EA and whether an amended, or a new EA would be required to advance a project to widen the

remaining segment of Steeles Avenue East (from Ninth Line to Beare Road), staff reviewed the EA. The outcomes of the EA need to be considered in the context of significant changes that have taken place since 1993, including:

- the 2013 Provincial approval of the Transportation Improvements: Donald Cousens Parkway to Morningside Avenue Link EA and associated design work currently underway by the City of Toronto for Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road and Ninth Line, as well as York Regions work on Ninth Line between Steeles Avenue East and Fieldside Street;
- the designation of the Rouge National Urban Park as Federal lands bounding significant sections of Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road (see Attachment 2);
- recent large-scale developments in the immediate area, including Canada Post and Amazon at the intersection of Steeles Avenue East and Morningside Avenue, as well as the new Morningside Avenue between Steeles Avenue East and Passmore Avenue;
- increases in local and surrounding traffic conditions from growth and development in surrounding jurisdictions;
- changes in how street infrastructure is designed, including Provincial and City of Toronto standards, as well as green infrastructure;
- numerous bridge structures requiring rehabilitation; and
- the identification of Steeles Avenue as a higher-order transit corridor in various City and Provincial plans.

Given the context changes outlined above, as well as the numerous legislative changes since 1993, a new EA would need to be undertaken given the in-force legislation. However, in February 2024, the Province of Ontario announced a proposal to revoke the Municipal Class EA (MCEA) in favour of a streamlined EA regulation for municipal infrastructure that would apply to higher-risk projects, to help deliver critical public works to support housing infrastructure for Ontario's rapidly growing population. The proposed changes to the Municipal Class EA are not yet in effect, and as such the EA requirements for any future Steeles Avenue East Widening EA are currently unclear.

2) Steeles Avenue as a High-Order Transit Connection

Steeles Avenue has been identified as a Higher Order Transit Connection in provincial plans, including Metrolinx's 2041 Regional Transportation Plan (the entire length of Steeles Avenue within the City of Toronto's boundaries), and the City of Toronto's Official Plan (between Jane Street and Pickering Town Line), in response to growth in the surrounding areas. A widened Steeles Avenue East could facilitate rapid surface transit in the future and ease congestion by providing better mobility for residents and employers throughout the region. Given this planning context, it will be important to ensure opportunities for rapid surface transit are integrated into any future studies.

The City of Toronto's current design work that is advancing for Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road and Ninth Line is protecting for future surface rapid transit opportunities within the widening, via curb lanes with sufficient width to accommodate potential for future dedicated bus lanes. At this time, neither TTC nor Metrolinx have

identified any short- or medium-term plans to advance planning for high-order transit on the portion of Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road.

3) Summary of Working Group Process and Discussions

In response to Council's direction to establish an inter-jurisdictional working group, City of Toronto staff reached out to various jurisdictions and agencies, in addition to those identified in the Council direction, to ensure that all interested parties had an opportunity to participate. The objective of the Working Group was to build inter-regional consensus around an approach to Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the following jurisdictions and agencies:

- City of Toronto (including Transportation Services, City Planning, and City Manager's Office)
- City of Markham
- City of Pickering
- Durham Region
- Metrolinx
- Ministry of Transportation
- Parks Canada
- TTC
- Toronto & Region Conservation Area
- York Region

The initial outreach and establishment of the Working Group focused on information sharing and discussion. To this end, City staff organized and facilitated three meetings with the Working Group, summarized below:

Meeting #1 (March 17, 2025)

The first Working Group meeting focussed on developing a shared understanding of the various jurisdictions' plans, project and budgets related to the area. Representatives from each of the municipalities and agencies was asked to prepare and present an overview of current and planned projects or work within the Steeles Avenue East area, as well as current or planned development and growth that may impact the area. Presentations were followed by an open discussion and questions amongst all in attendance. The presentations and discussions were valuable to understanding the variety of interests and impacts across the City and Regions. In summary, participants provided an overview of:

- Durham Region – planning and policy context for growth, as well as transportation, servicing and implementation strategies, noting Steeles Avenue East as a critical transportation investment.
- York Region – collaboration with City of Toronto on the current Steeles Avenue East work from Tapscott Road to Ninth Line, Ninth Line widening and reconstruction, as well as its 10-Year Capital Plan.
- City of Markham – current, relevant development application, Secondary Plans and Transportation Master Plan.

- City of Pickering – overview of current and planned development projects, with projected number of associated units.
- Parks Canada – current context and concerns about the intersection of Steeles Avenue East and Reesor Road.
- TTC – current operations along Steeles Avenue East, as well as the need to protect for the future operation of buses along the corridor

Presentations demonstrated the scale of recent and future development in adjacent jurisdictions and the impacts these will have on the traffic on Steeles Avenue East as a boundary road.

Meeting #2 (May 8, 2025)

The second Working Group meeting focussed on an open discussion to identify where there may be opportunities to align interests amongst the jurisdictions. The group discussed the need to cooperatively develop an approach to studying Steeles Avenue East, with mutually acceptable solutions.

The City of Toronto noted that no budget for any widening work on Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road is identified in the City's Council-approved Ten-Year Capital Plan. Additionally, there are no active development applications within the City of Toronto's boundaries between Ninth Line and Beare Road, as much of these lands are within the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP).

The Working Group continued to discuss potential to explore options for undertaking any future study, including co-leading, other jurisdictions leading, cost-sharing, developing scope cooperatively, or other options that recognize resourcing constraints, specifically noted by the City of Toronto.

The City of Toronto's Official Plan identifies a 36-metre right-of-way for Steeles Avenue, from Keele Street to Pickering Town Line. Property acquisition would be required to achieve any future road widenings. During the meeting wrap-up, the complexity of any road widening or infrastructure work within the RNUP was flagged as a challenge and identified as a topic for a future discussion.

Meeting #3 (September 24, 2025)

At the third Working Group meeting, Parks Canada was asked to provide a presentation on the process for potential road widening within the RNUP, which covers most of the southern portion of Steeles Avenue East under discussion.

Parks Canada staff provided a presentation outlining the history and process for creating the RNUP and the RNUP Land Assembly Agreement (2018), which refers to the process and agreements that Parks Canada and other partners (City of Toronto, the Town of Markham, the City of Pickering, the City of Richmond Hill, and the Regional Municipality of York) undertook to acquire and assemble land for the establishment and growth of the park. Since the establishment of the RNUP, Parks Canada has not yet undertaken a process to extract lands from the park towards infrastructure projects, including road widenings, for example. RNUP would continue to be a key participant in any future discussions or studies to confirm next steps and process requirements.

Next Steps & Summary

As part of its commitment to supporting discussions amongst the various jurisdictions and agencies, City staff (led by Transportation Planning within City Planning, with participation from Transportation Services) will be undertaking a macro-level analysis of current and future traffic within and around Steeles Avenue East from Ninth Line to Beare Road. This work will commence in the fourth quarter of 2025 and is targeted for completion in the third quarter of 2026. York Region and Durham Region will provide information and data to support this work and participate, as appropriate.

The City's current priority for Steeles Avenue East is to continue to advance the widening of the portion of Steeles Avenue East between Tapscott Road and Ninth Line, which is a funded project within the City's Capital Plan, with a fifty-fifty funding contribution from York Region.

Through inter-jurisdictional discussions amongst Working Group members regarding prioritization and resourcing, while other jurisdictions identified this work as a priority, none have indicated that could be funded or resourced from their capital budgets at this time. The City of Toronto is committed to advancing the macro-level traffic analysis but will not be advancing further feasibility study or design work to widen Steeles Avenue East between Ninth Line and Beare Road at this time, given existing study commitments, capital project priorities and resourcing constraints.

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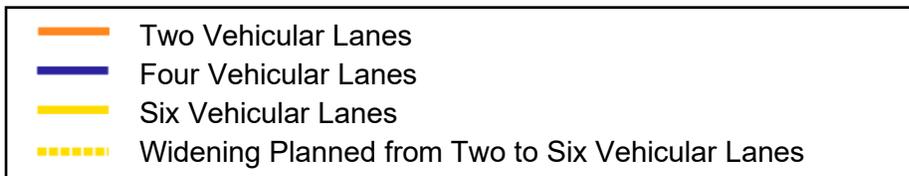
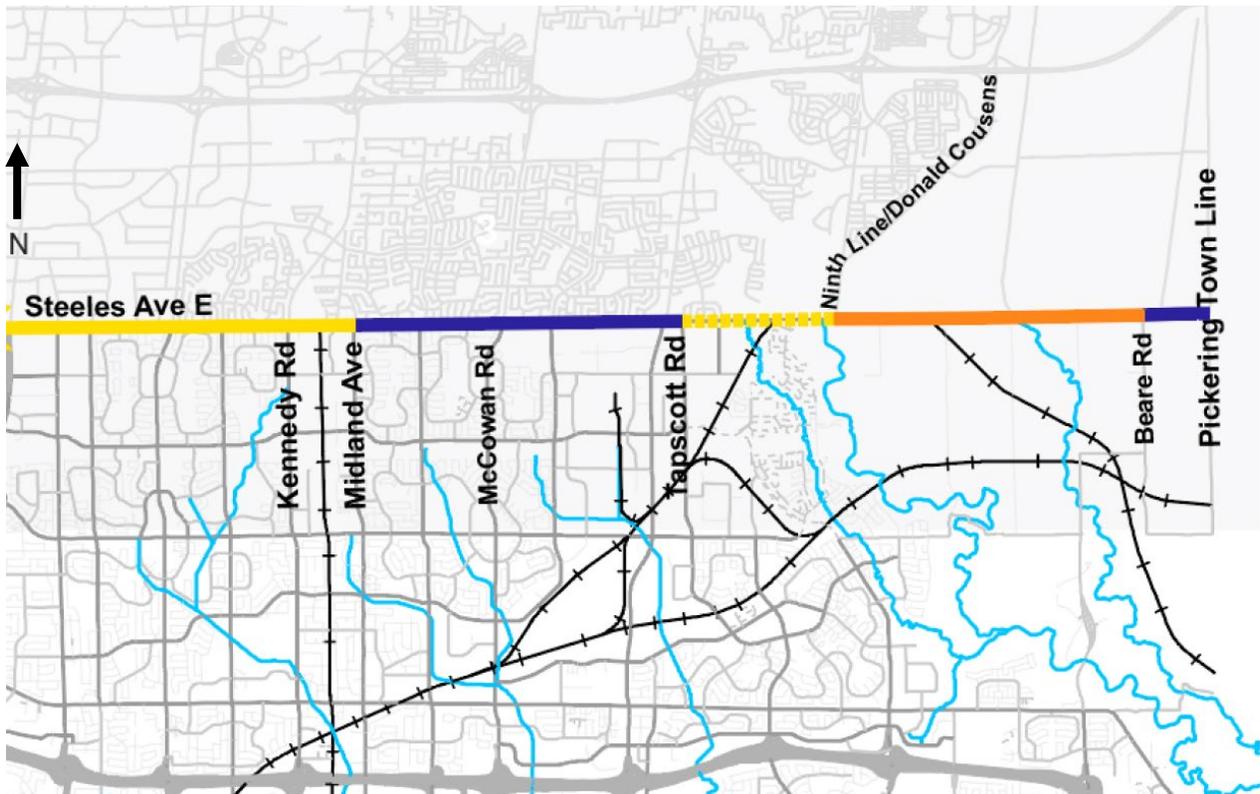
Ashley Curtis
Acting General Manager, Transportation Services

ATTACHMENTS

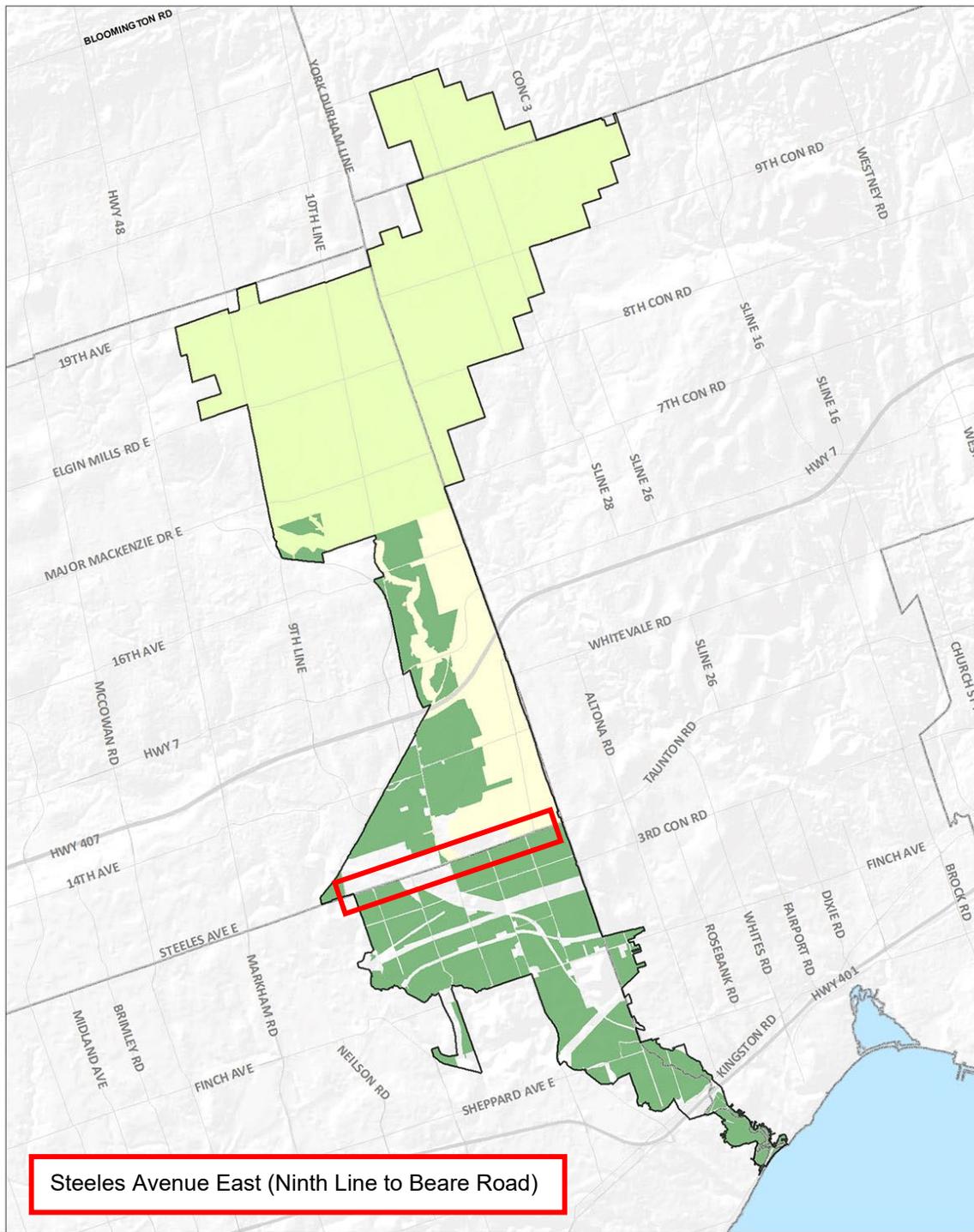
Attachment 1: Steeles Avenue East – Existing and Planned Vehicular Lanes
Attachment 2: Rouge National Urban Park & Steeles Avenue East (Ninth Line to Beare Road)

Steeles Avenue East (Ninth Line to Beare Road) Working Group

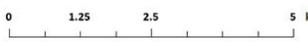
Attachment 1: Steeles Avenue East – Existing and Planned Vehicular Lanes



Attachment 2: Rouge National Urban Park & Steeles Avenue East (Ninth Line to Beare Road)



Steeles Avenue East (Ninth Line to Beare Road)

 <p>Date: October 2017 Created by: T.R.C.A. Information Services/Information Technologies Disclaimer: The Data used to create this map was compiled from a variety of sources & dates. The T.R.C.A. takes no responsibility for errors or omissions in the data and retains the right to make changes & corrections at anytime without notice. For further information about the data on this map, please contact the T.R.C.A. GIS Department. (416) 661-6600.</p>	<h3>Rouge National Urban Park Area</h3> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) Area  Federal Lands Previously Transferred to Parks Canada for RNUP  Provincial Land Transferring to Parks Canada for RNUP  TRCA Land to be transferred to Parks Canada for RNUP  Municipal Boundary
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Source: <https://parks.canada.ca/pn-np/on/rouge/visit/brochures>

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