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County?s Transportation Master Plan aimed at addressing growing population

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Dufferin County is looking to prepare its roadways to accommodate the growing population and changes in the modes of transport by implementing a new transportation master plan.

During their meeting on Oct. 12, Dufferin County councillors were presented with the transportation master plan from Brett Sears, project manager for WSP, an engineering firm. The transportation master plan looked at existing travel patterns and brought forward recommendations to address different modes of transportation, the widening and rehabilitation of roadways, and constructing bypasses needed to accommodate the projected population growth by 2051.

?We can recognize that there are different needs, and we're trying to say these are the ones we should focus on and dedicate the financial resources for,? said Sears. ?Generally, the County Road network has capacity to meet the volumes that are here today, but if this growth materializes as forecast, and we think it will, we need to be prepared for that.?

The report to council laid out improvements to roadways that can be done on the County level and the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) level.

The four projects at the County level include widening County Rd. 109 to four lanes between County Rd. 25 and Hwy. 10, widening County Rd. 16 to four lanes between Hwy. 10 and Mono Amaranth Towline Rd., widening County Rd. 7 to four lanes between Hwy. 10 and Side Rd. 5, and constructing a new two-lane road along Amaranth East Luther Towline to bypass Grand Valley. The recommendations for improvement at the MTO level included widening Hwy. 9 to a four-lane roadway from Hwy. 10 to County Rd. 18 and widening Hwy. 10 to a four-lane roadway between Side Rd. 15/Mono Center Rd. and Hwy. 89.

One of the main concerns raised by councillors was the timeline associated with the widening of Highway 10 to four lanes from Mono Centre Rd. (Camilla) to Hwy. 89. According to the Transportation Master Plan, the widening of Hwy. 10 is a ?long-term' phase to be constructed by 2051.

?My problem with the Highway 10 issue is it talks out to the 2051 threshold, which means best case scenario building starts around 2043. That highway needs to be upgraded now it doesn't need to be upgraded 20 years from now, unless you're willing to accept the continued carnage, deaths, accidents, detours and closures that happen on a regular basis, particularly in winter ? I'm not willing to accept it,? said Coun. Darren White, mayor of Melanchthon.

?I don't know how we can pass something that doesn't focus on Highway 10, I would suggest that that's probably our largest problem,? added Coun. Todd Taylor, deputy mayor of Orangeville.

Melanchthon deputy mayor James McLean raised questions about an assessment on County Rd. 124, and whether there were any considerations to widening the roadway similar to Highway 10.

?It's a busy throughway during rush hour during the week, and it serves as a major artery on weekends during the summer and winter,? said McLean.

Sears explained that County Rd. 124 did not come up as a project recommended for the County to spend resources on due to a focus on the Shelburne bypass.

McLean also questioned whether motor vehicle collision data is looked at when determining the need for road upgrades.

?It depends on the circumstance. If we're looking at intersections than yes there are typical protocols, we can flow the data through and that includes collision data. There are some for roads, but it's predominantly driven by total volume of vehicles and percentage of heavy vehicles within the compositions of total traffic,? said Scott Burns, director of public works.

The recommended Shelburne bypass was also a project of concern for councillors, particularly the need to move forward with consulting the Ministry of Transportation to have the project developed as well as the suggested location.

According to the report, the recommended location of the Shelburne bypass is across 30 Side Rd. between County Rd. 11 and 4th Line, then along 4th Line to meet Hwy. 10.

Councillors from neighbouring municipalities to Shelburne noted their disappointment in not having their council consulted in the proposed location for the bypass.

?My council is not against the bypass; we just think there is probably a better route. Part of the problem is we weren't consulted, nobody asked us what our thoughts were, nobody came to us and said ?we're doing this'; it just showed up in a glossy document and now it puts us in a position where we almost have to take a position oppositional to the report,? said White.

Sears noted they looked at three options for the bypass location and determined the route based on where the majority of vehicles were travelling. He added that the recommendation is not the final solution but a proposed solution for MTO to use.

Dufferin County Warden Wade Mills spoke to the timeline of both the Shelburne bypass and the expansion of Hwy. 10 lanes.

?These are not projects that we are going to undertake ourselves, but they're projects for which we'll be advocating. I think from an advocacy point of view they should be high priority and they should be in the near term because quite frankly from an expectation point of view, it's what our constituents are expecting,? said Mills, who's also Shelburne's mayor.

The Transportation Master Plan will be updated periodically to align with changes in need.

Future steps in the Transportation Master Plan needed before construction include issuing a study completion with a 30-day public review period, allocating a budget to specific projects, environmental assessments for each project, and design.