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Shelburne council advocates for bypass or truck route at ROMA

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne has once again advocated to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) regarding the community's need for a bypass or truck route.

Mayor Wade Mills and Town representatives made a presentation to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation Eric Doidge on Jan. 20 at the annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference in Toronto.

Mayor Mills said the presentation ?allowed this critical issue for the Town to be re-stated and provided a compelling presentation which included why the Town believes that a truck bypass/truck route is needed.?

The Town of Shelburne has been asking the MTO for a solution regarding heavy truck traffic on Hwy. 10 and Hwy. 89 since 2003 when they requested the MTO initiate a needs assessment and review of existing municipal road systems and how they could be configured into a future bypass.

Representatives from the Town of Shelburne again advocated for the need during the ROMA conference in 2019.

In the presentation to the MTO, the Town of Shelburne provided a list of reasons why they believe a bypass is needed for the community.

The list included:

? Support safe and timely movement of goods and services

? Limiting the impacts of truck traffic on the community such as safety, congestion, noise and air quality

? The vision of Shelburne's downtown and main street corridors as vibrant, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places

? Support the Town's commitment to building more homes for buyers who value a small town, but view truck-related impacts as a deterrent to choosing Shelburne

? Unlocking the intensification and redevelopment potential of Shelburne's core areas

According to data provided in the report, a 2008 study by MTO showed that 90 to 95 per cent of truck traffic is through traffic only, and Shelburne is not the final destination. The same study also indicated that the capacity of the highways through Shelburne is 800 vehicles per peak hour.

The Town of Shelburne noted that a 2015 traffic study completed by the Town showed the vehicle traffic is between 850-1200 per peak hour, with roughly 50 per cent being truck traffic.

?This further illustrates that with truck traffic eliminated, the road would be back to operating capacity,? reads the report.

The report also highlighted the Town of Shelburne's concerns with the amount of traffic making its way through the downtown core including pedestrian safety, safety of day-to-day traffic, and determinants from investing in the area.

?We feel it is imperative that the Town of Shelburne be considered as a transportation priority by MTO to ensure the Town can support building more homes that are desired in the market, support the overall local economy of the Town, provide options for local car and pedestrian traffic, and minimize the inherent risk to pedestrian and car traffic on Highway 89 and Highway 10 which will only continue to grow as the large developments in the Town continue,? reads the report.

As part of the presentation, staff also provided four potential route options for the MTO, including two from existing infrastructure and two requiring the construction of new roadways.

During Shelburne's Council meeting on Monday (Jan. 27), Mills addressed the topic of the Town having a preferred route for the potential bypass.

?One of the items that was up for discussion leading into this meeting was whether or not there was a need to identify a preferred route,? he said. ?It really doesn't make sense for the Town of Shelburne to be choosing a route and being a proponent in any sort of environmental assessment process because regardless of where this goes, it's ultimately going to be in other municipal jurisdictions outside of the Town of Shelburne.?

He added, ?I think the reception we got from MTO staff was positive. I think they understand that argument.?

A timeline for a response from the MTO or the potential future of the truck route has not yet been released.