



Meeting Date: July 5, 2023

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Report No: PWE 33-2023

Subject: Old River Road Update

Recommendation:

THAT Report PWE 33-2023, re: Old River Road Update be received for information.

Purpose:

To provide Council and residents with a status update on the Old River Road Project.

Background:

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre, through the completion of a schedule B Environmental Assessment in 2011 and a subsequent [schedule C Environmental Assessment \(EA\)](#) in 2018, has reviewed Old River Road for several alternatives to provide slope stabilization to sections of the road, improved intersection alignment and sightlines, as well as reduce and minimize cut through traffic.

On October 12, 2022, Council awarded the detailed design of Old River Road to IBI/Arcadis Group to carry out the design and move this project forward to completion.

Analysis:

Old River Road is a long curving and winding road that extends from Glendon Drive to Pulham Road with a project length of approximately 1.89km. The roadway is located within a narrow non-standard right of way with varying right of way widths, adjacent to the Thames River. During the spring or in heavy rain events, the roadway frequently floods in low lying areas, and due to slope instability, a portion of the road is slipping towards the river.



Figure 1: Project Area

This project will improve the roadway stability, improve drainage, improve intersection sightlines, provide for an improved roadway cross section where feasible, and look to improve flood resilience where possible.

The primary deliverables for this detailed design assignment include field investigations, public consultation, preliminary and final design, approvals, contract preparation and delineation of property acquisition.

Particular focus areas for the assignment include:

- Improved slope stability;
- Intersection improvements;
- Flood resilience improvements where possible;
- Stormwater drainage improvements;
- Property acquisition refinement;
- Public Consultation, and,
- Preparation of the complete tender package, and contract administration.

Public Consultation:

A public information centre (PIC) was held on March 2, 2023 from 4-6pm at the Komoka Wellness Centre. All property owners were mailed notice of the PIC, in addition to information being provide via the municipal website. Staff and the consultant placed display boards to reacquaint residents with the project, as well as gather feedback on how the purposed emergency access gate at Pulham Road might operate. Appendix A contains the display boards presented at the PIC.

A number of common/similar comments were received from the public specifically around gate operation and the need for there to be some form of access for residents, a number of suggestions include: having the gate locked with residents provided keys, having the gate operated on the honour system with residents closing it after use, having an electronic means of opening and closing.

When the design drawings have reached a 90% stage staff will hold another public information centre (PIC) to share with Council and residents the roadway design, this will be an opportunity for property owners to ask detailed questions, review detailed plans, while still providing an opportunity for minor tweaks before the completion of the final tender package.

A summary of comments received at PIC #1 can be found in Appendix B

Property Acquisition:

Staff have sent a number of letters to residents advising of the potential property impacts and provided detailed property impact plans. Several meetings between staff and individual property owners have occurred. Now that staff have reviewed and received a 30% design package and additional information on impacts to private property, staff will initiate further discussion related to property needs related to the project.

Project Status/Schedule:

The consultant and staff have recently reviewed the 30% design drawings, tree impact plans, and geotechnical report in support of this project. The design is progressing, and refinements and adjustments are being undertaken to minimize costs, and property impacts.

In discussion with the Middlesex County and ensuring a coordinated approach to intersection improvements to Glendon Drive and Old River Road, the County has identified that they will take on all costs and lead the works associated with intersection realignment which has a positive impact to the cost of the municipal project. There are significant property requirements and extensive grading needed to realign the intersection.

The design work is still ongoing with a tender package and drawings still expected to be completed and ready for tender issuance in early 2024.

Natural Heritage Considerations:

The consultant's ecologist has identified pileated woodpecker feeding areas, no active nests were found at this time. However, should active nests be found within the project disturbance limits a 36-month monitoring period is required. This could significantly impact the project timelines for construction.

The ecologist has also identified potential badger habitat, a den located in the area has been identified as a potential badger den. Badger habitat is critical habitat and could have a significant impact on the project and the overall design. Efforts are underway to confirm the user of the den and understand any potential impacts. Should this area be confirmed as protected badger habitat additional property may be required to accommodate the design.

Vegetation and tree removal is limited to times outside of April 1st to August 30th as per the migratory bird Act.

Staff are actively working with the consultant and required approval authorities to minimize and mitigate the above noted risks. However, some of the risk is legislated and may impact the timing of project delivery, and design of the project.

A summary of the natural heritage review can be found in Appendix C.

Project Risks:

Depending on the nature of some additional field investigations related to natural heritage there are potentially significant impacts to project timing and overall design, with the possibility of increased property acquisition costs.

Through the natural heritage field investigation, a number of invasive species were noted particularly Japanese Knotwood, additional care and costs will need to be included into the tender to properly deal with and dispose of this invasive species.

Depending on the timing of the County intersection works for Old River Road and Glendon Drive. The municipality may need to provide full access to Pulham Road as an interim measure. The gating near Pulham Road is only recommended/feasible when the required intersection improvements allowing full access to Glendon Drive are complete.

During initial property acquisition discussions all property owners were open to further discussions with the municipality. However, should the municipality and property owners be unable to come to an amicable agreement on acquiring property needed to support this project, expropriation may be required which will negatively impact the timing of this project and potentially increase property acquisition costs.

Largely due to inflation in construction costs, the estimated construction cost based on the 30% design drawings is 16% higher than initially identified in the 5-year capital plan. Recently inflation has somewhat cooled from record highs, however if there is a return to higher inflation this will add additional cost pressures to this project.

Next Steps:

Staff will continue to work with the consultant to finalize the options for council consideration so that a final report can be brought forward and a decision can be made on this project. The financial implications noted in this Report will be based on council direction on how to address the deterioration of Old River Road.

Financial Implications:

The current 2023 Council approved budget for Old River Road is \$2,207,500.00 and this budget will be used for design, tender preparation, and contract administration works previously awarded to IBI/Arcadis in the amount of \$529,435.59. The remaining \$1,678,064.41 will be used to cover property acquisition costs through subsequent reports to Council for approval.

The estimated construction cost for 2024 based on the 30% design submission is estimated at \$3,658,229.38 (estimate excludes: property acquisition costs, landscaping costs, utility relocation costs, and HST). This is \$508,229.38 or approximately 16% more than the estimated construction cost as identified in the 5-year capital forecast. Staff and the consultant will continue to refine the construction cost estimate to allow for accurate budgeting for 2024, and subsequent Council review and approval through the 2024 budget process.

Strategic Plan:

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

- Sustainable Infrastructure and Services

This project will ensure a robust, safe, and efficient transportation network that builds on Council's Strategic Plan and the Middlesex Centre's Official plan, providing a long-term solution to identified issues with Old River Road ensuring a safe and reliable transportation network.

Attachments:

Appendix A – PIC #1 Display Boards

Appendix B – Summary of PIC #1 Comments

Appendix C – Summary of Natural Heritage Site Investigation