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# 1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the existing land use conditions associated with the Western Vaughan Transportation Improvements Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA). The approved Terms of Reference (ToR) included a preliminary description of the existing Study Area environment with the commitment that the description would be expanded upon in the IEA. With this in mind, the following investigative studies are proposed for the purposes of generating a more detailed description and understanding of the environment for use in the screening, assessment, and evaluation of alternatives during the IEA:

- Natural Environment;
- Land Use;
- Built Heritage;
- Archaeological;
- Socio-Economic;
- Noise; and
- Air Quality.

The results from undertaking each of these overviews will be documented in separate stand-alone reports during the IEA. In each case, a draft will be prepared and circulated to the Review Agency and Community Stakeholder Advisory Committees and will be posted on the project website for comment. The final Existing Conditions Report will form a chapter of the EA Report with each of the stand-alone reports becoming supporting documents to the EA Report.

## 1.1 Land Use Study Team

The Land Use study team consists of the Planning Partnership staff. The actual individuals and their specific roles are provided as follows:

- **Ron Palmer, BES, MCIP, RPP**, Partner: Project Manager; and
- **Kristina la Fleur, MA, M.Sc.PI**, Planner: Research and Analysis.

# 2. Western Vaughan Study Area

In accordance with the approved ToR, the present Study Area for the Western Vaughan Transportation Improvements IEA includes the western portion of the City of Vaughan from Highway 400 to the east, to Highway 50 in the west, Highway 407 to the south and halfway between Teston Road and Kirby Road to the north.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Available Secondary Source Information Collection and Review

With this current Study Area in mind, available secondary sources of information were collected and reviewed by the Land use Study Team to determine existing land use conditions. The following sources of secondary information were collected and reviewed:

- Greenbelt Plan (2005);
- Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006);
- Provincial Policy Statement (2005);
- The Region of York Official Plan (2007);
- York Region Transportation Master Plan . Planning 2031; and
- City of Vaughan Official Plan and related Official Plan Amendments.

## 3.2 Process Undertaken

The existing conditions report is based on a review of current planning documents in order to identify the existing policy context for land use within the Study Area. The review of current planning documents commenced with Provincial policy and also included a review of Regional and local policy/planning related documents.

The review of existing conditions also included a windshield land use survey, completed in July 2007 to determine the existing land use context and overall character of the identified Study Area.

# 4. Existing Land Use Conditions

## 4.1 Results

### 4.1.1 Corridor Character

A wide range of land uses can be found within the boundaries of the Study Area. The following represents an analysis of the general character types that can be found along each of the corridors. The attached maps titled, Existing Road Widths and Existing Land Uses illustrate the existing road conditions.

#### Forest / Naturalized Field or Ravine / Golf Course



Major Mackenzie Drive at Pine Valley Drive



Pine Valley Drive at Major Mackenzie Drive



Pine Valley Drive between Teston Road and Kirby Road

**Farm Fields/ Light Industrial**



Major Mackenzie Drive between Highway 50 and Highway 27



Highway 50 at Major Mackenzie Drive

### Large Industrial



Highway 7, between Highway 50 and Highway 27

### Commercial Node

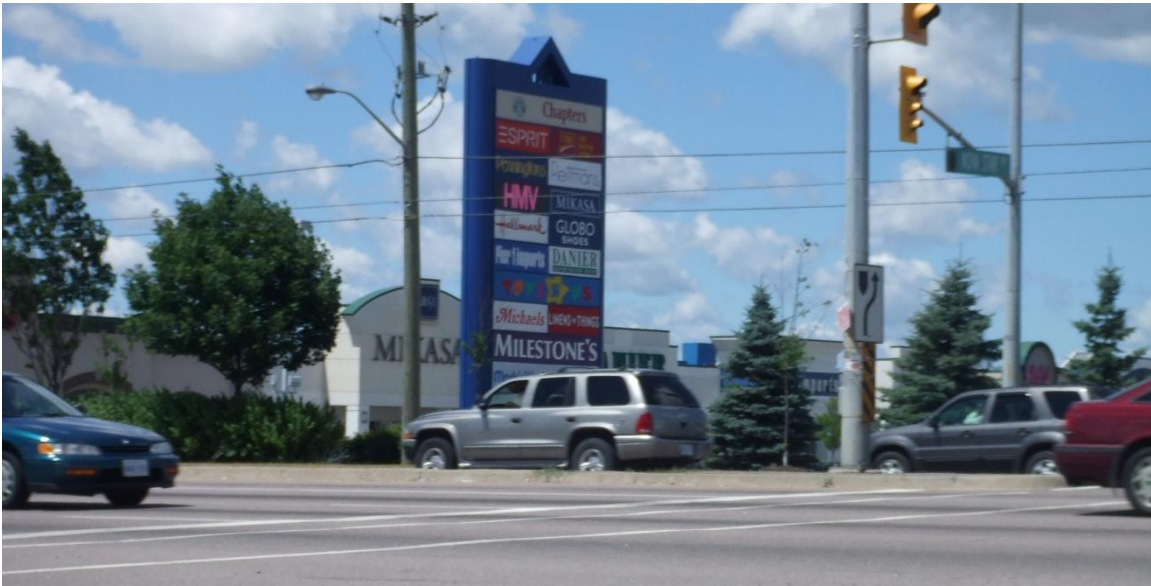


Weston Road and Rutherford Road



Weston Road and Rutherford Road

**Big Box Commercial**



Highway 7 at Pine Valley Drive



Highway 7 at Pine Valley Drive

The Regional Municipality of

Strip Plaza / Strip Office



Highway 7 at Pine Valley Drive



Weston Road, Royale Avenue Plaza

Mixed Commercial



Highway 7 at Pine Valley Drive



Weston Road at Highway 7

Reverse Frontage Residential / Fences



Langstaff Road at Pine Valley Drive



Rutherford Road at Fossil Hill Road



Highway 7 at Bruce Street

**Front Residential / Side Frontage Residential / Window Street**



Islington Avenue at Gamble Road



Weston Road near Major Mackenzie Drive

*4.1.1.1 Existing Character of North/South Corridors*

• **Highway 50**

The character of this corridor is that of a rural highway. Used as a high-speed route for traffic, this four-lane highway is primarily surrounded by fields and farms. A small residential community with reverse frontage units has been developed on the west side at Langstaff Road/Cottrelle Boulevard with a shopping plaza at the intersection. A golf course and a small number of industrial uses can be seen along this corridor, including a large industrial warehouse with freight carton storage and smaller auto-body uses.

• **Highway 27**

The north end of this corridor has an abundance of naturalized areas with the occasional residential units, new estate subdivisions or small-scale commercial stores along the roadside. The road is often lined by trees or small fields, and a small cliff is located on the east side of the road, with trees overlooking the corridor. As one travels south of Major Mackenzie Drive, the two-lane highway expands into four-lanes. The trees along the cliff are replaced with reverse frontage residential units and the topography flattens, leaving a streetscape composed of farmers fields on the west and reverse frontage residential units on the east. As Highway 7 is approached, large industrial warehouses become the dominant built form across the landscape.

- **Islington Avenue**

The landscape along Islington Avenue is quite varied. The two dominant landscapes of this corridor are green spaces and residential units, with the road width alternating between two-lanes and four-lanes.

The streetscape between Major Mackenzie Drive and Rutherford Road maintains its natural fields and forested areas on the east, while the west side is suburban in nature . manicured parks, residential units and the occasional retail plaza at street intersections. A majority of the housing units along this corridor face onto a side street, parallel to Islington Avenue . creating a window street.

Towards the southern portion of Islington, the character of the street begins to change. The repetitive suburban development transitions into smaller and more unique cottage-looking dwellings that often front onto Islington Avenue.

As Highway 7 is approached, a ravine flanks the corridor as the buildings become more scattered. The elevation of the land on either side of the corridor creates a unique intersection at Highway 7 with a commercial plaza at a lower grade than the corridor on the west and a large retaining wall elevated on the east.

The corridor also contains a number of built units that do not fit the surrounding character, such as a large parking lot, retaining wall and church surrounded by green space, and a wide-lot five storey apartment building with a modern façade surrounded by single storey cottage residences.

- **Pine Valley Drive**

- **North Corridor**

The northern Pine Valley Drive corridor is rural in nature. The two-lane road is either closely lined by forested areas, or surrounded by farmers fields, where the setback of the farmhouse to the road varies. A small pocket of bungalows can be found near the intersection with Major Mackenzie Drive, each lot surrounded by dense forest.

- **South Corridor**

The southern Pine Valley Drive corridor is characterized by the dominance of fences from reverse frontage residential units, mixed with the occasional front facing home. The street feels very spacious, as the four-lane corridor is opened up by small grassy berms before terminating at a wall of fences. The study corridor terminates at Highway 7 with a large commercial node.

- **Weston Road**

The Weston Road corridor has three major streetscape characters: rural farmland, suburban residential and large format commercial. At the northern section of the study, agricultural vendors and open fields lining a two-lane road characterize the rural area . however, new residential units are now being developed in this area. Further south, the road width widens to four-lanes and the streetscape is lined by residential units that either face a side street parallel to Weston Road creating a window street, or side onto Weston Road itself. Fences and reverse frontage residential units begin to appear south of Rutherford Road. Strip plazas or big box commercial nodes can be found at major intersections. Finally, the southern part of Weston Road is predominantly commercial in nature. It contains big box retail plazas and mixed commercial offices surrounded by large parking lots.

#### 4.1.1.2 Existing Character of East/West Corridors

##### • Nashville Road / Teston Road

###### • **East Corridor Æ Teston Road**

This corridor is rural in nature. The two-lane road is primarily surrounded by farms and fields, with stretches of the road lined with thick vegetation. The topography along this corridor consists of a number of soft hills and valleys.

###### • **West Corridor Æ Nashville Road**

The eastern portion of the western Nashville Road/Teston Road corridor cuts through the hamlet of Kleinburg. The hamlet nature of the two-lane street is evident through the clusters of one-to-two story single detached homes with small frontages on the street. These clusters of homes are surrounded by thick vegetation that turns into fields west of approximately Huntington Road. These fields contain the occasional agricultural building or light industrial use.

##### • Major Mackenzie Drive

The Major Mackenzie Drive corridor has three different streetscape characters; however its road width remains fairly constant at two-lanes. The first streetscape can be found between both Weston Road and Pine Valley Drive, and Islington Avenue and Highway 27. These portions of the corridor are directly lined by small grassy fields with reverse frontage residential units visible in the lots behind. The second streetscape can be found primarily between Pine Valley Drive and Islington Avenue. This portion of the corridor is lined by lush vegetation set back from the road, and surrounded by forested areas. The third streetscape only occurs to the west of Highway 27 and is composed of farmers fields and light industrial uses, such as freight carton storage.

##### • Rutherford Road

Rutherford Road is a four-lane road between Weston Road and Highway 27, and a two-lane road between Highway 27 and Highway 50. This corridor contains three different streetscapes: suburban, naturalized and farm/industrial.

The suburban landscape is primarily residential with big box commercial or retail plazas at road intersections. Along these portions of the corridor, the road is primarily lined with fences or windows . reverse frontage residential units or units fronting onto a side street parallel to Rutherford Road, creating a window street.

The naturalized landscape surrounds the roadway with forested areas and lush vegetation, however, the vegetation is set back from the road . so it does not overcrowd or hang over the corridor.

Along the western portion of the Rutherford Road corridor, the farm/industrial landscape is predominant. Large fields surround the road, occasionally containing industrial buildings or farms. Just east of Highway 50, a very large box warehouse has been built on the northern side of the corridor.

##### • Langstaff Road

###### • **East Corridor**

The eastern Langstaff Road corridor is predominantly residential in nature. Reverse frontage residential units and fences line both north and south sides of the road. The easternmost edge of the Study Area borders mixed commercial units, and the western portion of the Study Area includes

the forested land surrounding the Islington Avenue intersection. As one travels west along the corridor, the road transitions from a four-lane corridor with the occasional planted median into two-lanes. As well, thick vegetation has been planted to replace fences behind many residential units on the western side of the study corridor.

- **West Corridor**

The western Langstaff Road corridor is predominantly agricultural in nature. The two-lane road is occasionally lined with minimal vegetation and further surrounded by fields and light industrial use.

- **Highway 7**

Throughout the Study Area, the character of the Highway 7 corridor transitions across a wide spectrum. On the eastern end, the streetscape is framed by large big box commercial plazas with expansive parking lots.

Further westward, smaller strip offices and plazas become more dominant along the south side of the corridor and at road intersections. Residential units dilute the mainly commercial landscape of Highway 7; however, they are primarily reverse frontage units, with fences lining the corridor. Just west of Pine Valley Drive, a number of front facing townhouse units are under construction. Closer to Highway 27, the corridor transitions into a more industrial streetscape as large industrial warehouses replace strip offices and residential communities. Between Highway 27 and Highway 50, a large number of vacant fields exist. However, multiple signs indicate that much of the land is either on the real estate market, or has future developed planned.

#### 4.1.2 Planning Policy Context

The following is a review of the existing planning policy documents and emerging planning direction within the Western Vaughan Transportation IEA Study Area. Provincial, Regional, and local documents that affect the Study Area include the Provincial Policy Statement, the Greenbelt Plan, Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the York Region Official Plan and the City of Vaughan Official Plan.

##### 4.1.2.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2005)

The current Provincial Policy Statement came into effect March 1, 2005. It provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development while aiming to protect resources of provincial interest, public health and safety and the quality of the natural environment. Policies regarding Building Strong Communities focus on the orderly development of land including works necessary to meet the current and projected needs for infrastructure. The following are excerpts from the subsections that are of particular relevance to this study:

1.1.1 *Healthy, liveable and safe communities are sustained by:*

- g) *ensuring that necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to meet current and projected needs*

1.5.1 *Healthy, active communities should be promoted by:*

- a) *planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, and facilitate pedestrian and non-motorized movement, including but not limited to, walking and cycling;*

1.6 Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities

1.6.1 *Transportation facilities shall be planned, designed, constructed and operated in an efficient and cost-effective manner and be integrated with planning for growth so that these are available to meet current and projected needs.*

1.6.2 *Consideration shall be given to the use of existing and planned infrastructure, and where appropriate, new infrastructure, to meet current and projected needs.*

1.6.3 *The delivery of goods and services shall be facilitated through the use of efficient and cost-effective transportation modes and infrastructure.*

1.6.5 Transportation Systems

1.6.5.1 *Transportation systems should be provided which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, and are appropriate to address projected needs.*

1.6.5.2 *Efficient use shall be made of existing and planned infrastructure.*

1.6.5.3 *Connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes should be maintained and, where possible, improved including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.*

1.6.5.4 *Transportation and land use considerations shall be integrated at all stages of the planning process.*

1.6.6 Transportation and Infrastructure Corridors

1.6.6.1 *Planning authorities shall plan for and protect corridors and right-of-ways for transportation, transit and infrastructure facilities to meet current and projected needs.*

1.6.6.2 *Planning authorities shall not permit development in planned corridors that could preclude or negatively affect the use of the corridor for the purpose(s) for which it was identified.*

1.6.6.3 *The preservation and reuse of abandoned corridors for purposes that maintain the corridors integrity and continuous linear characteristics should be encouraged, wherever feasible.*

1.6.6.4 *When planning for corridors and rights-of-way for significant transportation and infrastructure facilities, consideration will be given to the significant resources in Section 2: Wise Use and Management of Resources.*

1.8.1 b) *Promote the use of public transit and other alternative transportation modes in and between residential, employment (including commercial, industrial and institutional uses) and other areas where these exist or are to be developed.*

In addition to Section 1.0, Section 2.1.2 requires that planning for transportation and infrastructure facilities must consider natural resources must consider significant resources such as natural heritage, water, agricultural, mineral, cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

While the PPS represents a statement of the province's interest in transportation planning and development, it does not provide specific direction on transportation planning within the Study Area. More specific transportation policies related to the Study Area are found in Regional and local documents.

#### 4.1.2.2 Greenbelt Plan (2005)

The Greenbelt Plan, also introduced in 2005, provides direction on where urbanization should and should not occur in southern Ontario. The Plan provides protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological features and functions occurring within the Greenbelt as a result, there are general policies that are important to consider for the Western Vaughan Transportation IEA Study Area.

Section 4.2 of the Plan identifies policies for transportation development and planning:

*There is already extensive local and regional infrastructure within the Greenbelt to serve its settlements, agricultural and resource sectors and the rural economy. Existing infrastructure must be maintained and new infrastructure will be needed to continue serving existing and permitted land uses within the Greenbelt.*

*In addition, major infrastructure serving national, provincial and inter-regional needs traverses the Greenbelt. It is also anticipated that new and/or expanded facilities will be needed in the future to serve the substantial growth projected for southern Ontario.*

Furthermore, Section 4.2.1 General Infrastructure Policies identifies policies for lands in the Study Area falling within the Protected Countryside designation:

1. *All existing, expanded or new infrastructure subject to and approved under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Planning Act, the Aggregate Resources Act, the Telecommunications Act or by the National or Ontario Energy Boards, or which receives a similar environmental approval, is permitted within the Protected Countryside, subject to the policies of this section and provided it meets one of the following two objectives:*
  - a) *It supports agriculture, recreation and tourism, rural settlement areas, resource use or the rural economic activity that exists and is permitted within the Greenbelt; or*
  - b) *It serves the significant growth and economic development expected in southern Ontario beyond the Greenbelt by providing for the appropriate infrastructure connections among urban growth centres and between these centres and Ontario's borders.*
2. *The location and construction of infrastructure and expansions, extensions, operations and maintenance of infrastructure in the Protected Countryside, are subject to the following:*
  - a) *Planning, design and construction practices shall minimize, wherever possible, the amount of the Greenbelt, and particularly the Natural Heritage System, traversed and/or occupied by such infrastructure;*
  - b) *Planning, design and construction practices shall minimize, wherever possible, the negative impacts and disturbance of the existing landscape, including, but not limited to, impacts caused by light intrusion, noise and road salt;*
  - c) *Where practicable, existing capacity and co-ordination with different infrastructure services is optimized so that the rural and existing character of the Protected Countryside and the overall urban structure for southern Ontario established by Greenbelt and any provincial growth management initiatives are supported and reinforced;*

- d) *New or expanding infrastructure shall avoid key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features unless need has been demonstrated and it has been established that there is no reasonable alternative; and*
  - e) *Where infrastructure does cross the Natural Heritage System or intrude into or result in the loss of a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature, including related landform features, planning, design and construction practices shall minimize negative impacts and disturbance on the features or their related functions, and where reasonable, maintain or improve connectivity.*
3. *Infrastructure serving the agricultural sector, such as agricultural irrigation systems, may need certain elements to be located within the vegetation protection zone of a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature. In such instances, these elements of the infrastructure may be established within the feature itself or its associated vegetation protection zone but all reasonable efforts shall be made to keep such infrastructure out of key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features or the vegetation protection zones.*

Together, the policies of the Greenbelt Plan allow opportunities for new or expanded infrastructure, provided that it serves the expected growth in southern Ontario, is consistent with the aim of the Plan and seeks to minimize the impact on the environment.

#### 4.1.2.3 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to Grow (2006)

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe took effect on June 16, 2006. The Plan is a framework for implementing the Province's vision for building stronger, prosperous communities by better managing growth to 2031. It guides municipalities in making decisions on a range of issues including land use and infrastructure planning, urban form and housing. It also builds on other provincial initiatives including the Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Plan guides decision-making related to growth within Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). It contains policies that are intended to manage population and employment until 2031. The intent of the Plan is to minimize urban sprawl by directing a significant portion of new development to existing built-up areas - with a focus on urban growth centres, intensification corridors, major transit station areas and brownfields. Within the 2031 timeframe, York Region's population is estimated to increase by 740,000 persons and accommodate an additional 390,000 jobs.

Key policies within the Plan related to transportation development and planning include Section 3.0, which provides the framework for infrastructure planning and strategic investment decisions to support and accommodate forecasted population and economic growth in the GGH. In addition, Section 3.2.2 of the Plan states that the overall transportation system within the GGH will be planned and managed to provide connectivity among transportation modes for moving people and for moving goods, b) offer a balance of transportation choices that reduces reliance upon any single mode and promotes transit, cycling and walking, c) be sustainable, by encouraging the most financially and environmentally appropriate mode for trip-making; d) offer multi-modal access to jobs, housing, schools, cultural and recreational opportunities, and goods and services; and, e) provide for the safety of system users.

The Plan's Schedule 2 . Places to Grow Concept, is illustrated in **Figure 1** (*Provincial Growth Plan*). This figure identifies existing major highways, future transportation corridors and highway extensions, proposed routes for higher order transit as well as the proposed Urban Growth Centre at Weston Road and Highway 7.

Figure 1. Provincial Growth Plan











