

HIGHWAY 2 TRANSIT PRIORITY MEASURES

CLASS EA AND DESIGN

Information Centre 2 Summary Report



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1. Introduction

This report summarizes the second round of Public Information Centres (PIC 2) hosted by Durham Region as part of the *Highway 2 Transit Priority Measures Class Environmental Assessment (EA)* study.

The purpose of PIC 2 was to:

- Provide information on the study and the transit vision for the corridor;
- Provide information on the evaluation of alternative design concepts in three “transit priority opportunity areas” along Highway 2 in Ajax and Pickering;
- Present and gather comments on the recommended design that comprised widening Highway 2 for curbside bus only lanes with on-road buffered bicycle lanes; and
- Summarize the potential environmental effects of the recommended design and proposed mitigation measures.

The PICs were held in two locations within the study area:

- October 22, 2011, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at McLean Community Centre, Ajax. Twenty-two (22) individuals signed in for the event, and an estimated 50 people were in attendance.
- October 29, 2011, 10:00am to 4:00pm at Pickering Town Centre. Twenty-three (23) individuals signed the sign in sheet at this location and an estimated 250 people reviewed the panels and spoke to staff.



2. Notification of the Public Information Centres

Advance notification of the PICs was provided to potentially interested residents and stakeholders through a variety of means:

- Direct mailing and emailing to all agencies and interested members of the public on the study's contact list, including review agencies and individuals/organizations previously engaged in similar Durham Region studies. Ninety-one (91) letters were distributed on October 11, 2011 and seventy-six (76) emails were sent to individuals.
- Direct mailing to 18 First Nations and Métis organizations on October 14,, 2011 (one by email).
- Direct mailing to all landowners and tenants adjacent to Highway 2 between Whites Road and Salem Road. Approximately 3,100 notices were mailed on October 11, 2011.
- Posting on the following websites:
 - Project website (www.durhambrrt.ca);

- Durham Region (www.durhamregion.ca);
- Durham Region Transit (www.durhamregiontransit.com)
- Pickering Town Centre (<http://www.pickeringtowncentre.com>)
- Newspaper advertisements in the *Ajax/Pickering News-Advertiser* on Friday October 7th, Thursday, October 13 and Wednesday, October 29.
- Portable sign messages were posted on Highway 2 in Ajax (east of Westney Road) and in Pickering (at Pickering Town Centre entrance) between October 17 to October 29.

The notices provided the following general information about the study:

- Project background and information on the recommended design alternative;
- Purpose, time and location of the PICs;
- A map of the study area and “Transit Priority Opportunity Areas”; and
- Information on additional opportunities for comments and input.

3. Arrangement of the Public Information Centres

The PICs in both locations were arranged in an open house, drop-in format. Staff representing Durham Region, the City of Pickering, the Town of Ajax and the project consultant (AECOM) participated in both PICs to engage attendees and answer questions. Display panels included information on the following study elements:

- Advancing the Region’s Transit Vision;
- The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment study process and summary of comments from the first PIC;
- The evaluation and the selection of a recommended cycling facility;
- An illustration of the typical cross sections for each of the alternative designs;
- The evaluation of the alternative designs and presentation of the recommended design;
- Potential impacts and proposed mitigation; and
- Next steps in the study.

Attendees were invited to review the panels, engage staff, and provide comments or questions on comment forms provided at the PICs or later on the project’s website.

In addition to the display panels, Durham Region showcased PowerPoint presentations, collages and posters prepared by William Dunbar Elementary Grade 6 students identifying their visions for Highway 2. These class “assignments” were completed two weeks after Durham Region and AECOM staff made a presentation to 75 students that introduced the topic of sustainability, while providing an overview of the Highway 2 Transit Priority Measures study. The student’s projects reflected the need to provide reliable and sustainable transportation choices, improve connectivity, enhance the corridor’s aesthetics through attractive streetscaping and most importantly, enrich the area’s quality of life.



4. Comments Received at PIC 2 (Pickering and Ajax Locations)

Durham Region elicited input at the second round of PICs through completed comment forms as well as comments and questions submitted to the project website (www.durhambtr.ca).

A summary of the comments received at both Pickering and Ajax PICs is presented below. Attendees were asked to specifically comment on the recommended design. A comprehensive summary of the comments received are provided below.

4.1 Summary of Comments Received

1) Do you have any questions or comments about the proposed recommended design?

Support for the recommended alternative

- Dedicated bus lanes are the best alternative – *“I agree that Alternative 3 is the best option...I believe that Pickering should become a “walking city” where it is safe to walk and ride a bicycle.”*
- Positive opinions on the plan – *“The plan is very good.”*
- Much needed changes – *“This is very slow coming...”*
- Ensure that the service is useful – *“Just make sure that the buses are very convenient, accessible and reliable.”*

Potential issues or challenges

- Left turns off of Highway 2 – *“Not enough time, not enough room, very dangerous.”*
- Length of time to construct the design and effects – *“I’m concerned about the traffic disruption during this time.”*
- Effects on vegetation – *“What’s the plan on reintroducing mature trees along the planned route? Younglings will take too long to grow.”*
- Unnecessary addition of bike lanes – *“Stuff is too far apart in Durham to cycle to, plus with snow on the ground most of the year, cycling is not feasible.”*
- Cost to the taxpayer – *“Take consideration of expenses so that it will not directly burden taxpayers.”*
- Ensuring effective use of the road – *“I suggest a hybrid approach...lanes should be used by transit vehicles only during peak periods and then opened to all vehicles during non peak periods.”*
- Environmental concerns - *“There appears to be a lack of consideration from this study to the effects of increased noise, pollution and lifestyle, etc.”*
- Unnecessary changes to an already busy road – *“Your proposal attempts to create an elitist, unnecessarily complex and confusing addition to Pickering roads.”*
- Effects on pedestrians crossing the road – *“Can you imagine another land for buses and bikes? How long would it take for a pedestrian to cross the road?”*
- Concerns over cycle lanes *“Painted hatch-marks don’t make a very secure buffer between the superior powered vehicles and the defenceless bicycle.”*
- Unnecessary changes to cycle lanes *“Why pay for an expensive new highway road structure for a bike lane at this time, when having an off road bike path structure would be adequate?”*

2) Other comments?

- Positive opinions on the presentation - *“Good presentation- this is a very busy area.”*
- Positive opinions on the alternative design concept - *“Everything looks good on paper.”*

- Alternative solution for bike lanes – *“Bike lanes – place along the sidewalk separated by grassy areas...safer than on the road.”*
- Further development – *“Are there plans to extend the design to Salem Road and beyond?”*
- Would like to see better links with GO Services- *“It would seem that a transportation hub at the north side of the new pedestrian crossing of the 401, to allow weather protected transfer between different modes would be desirable.”*

5. Summary

PIC2 in Ajax and Pickering were held to inform stakeholder and the public about the recommended alternative design for Highway 2 transit priority opportunity areas; this being widen Highway 2 for curbside bus only lanes with on-road buffered bicycle lanes. The PICs provided the public with the opportunity to learn more about the project and the proposed design as well as inviting discussion and comments in a relaxed and informal environment.

Overall, there appeared to be a lot of support for the recommended design and several attendees asked questions and provided useful input that will be addressed in the preferred alternative design and documented in the Environmental Study Report.

While most respondents were in favour of the dedicated transit lane, there was less positive response to the proposed on-road buffered bicycle lane. Several participants did not see the need for a bicycle lane and felt that the concept was too dangerous. Attendees were however, generally enthusiastic about improved transit services on Highway 2 and wanted to see improvements in service and in congestion along the corridor.

Respondents had positive comments about the PIC presentations and took the time to read the information available and learn more about the recommended design. Participants took the opportunity to share their views on the project and transit in general in Durham Region, providing useful feedback that will be important in the development of the project.