

SUBMISSION RE. FENELON FALLS SECOND CROSSING STUDY

September 3, 2020

To: Dillon Consulting, Att: Merrilees Willemse
C.c. Mayor Andy Letham, CKL
Councillor Doug Elmslie, CKL
C.A.O. Ron Taylor, CKL
Juan Rojas, CKL
Martin Sadowski, CKL

From: Fenelon Falls Stakeholders

Thank you for taking the time to present your draft summary findings and recommendations by way of a power point presentation at the stakeholders meeting at the Fenelon Falls Community Centre on August 5, 2020. Please accept these comments as our submission in response to your recommendations. We will address the major issues in order:

Intersection Improvements, Lindsay and Helen Streets

You have presented four alternatives to realign the traffic flow at this busy intersection in order to address traffic congestion, now and in the future. All of the realignments involve a material and fundamental change in the access to Sobeys and Tim Hortons, and the addition of another traffic light at Elliot Street. In our view none of these alternatives are to be recommended for the following reasons:

- 1) No matter what changes are made, the pedestrian crossing on the north side of the intersection should be eliminated. Presently there is serious risk to pedestrians from the advanced left turn from Helen Street and a poor-visibility right turn from Sobeys.
- 2) Another traffic light within mere meters of the existing light will impede traffic efficiency and add to confusion and congestion.
- 3) Elliot Street already experiences Tim Hortons traffic backing up all the way to Lindsay Street, even backing up southbound on Lindsay Street trying to turn left, so adding significant traffic volume to that street is a very bad idea. We are very concerned that there has been insufficient data analysis to understand the risks in overloading Elliot Street, as we have not seen such data in your presentations. It is common knowledge in the community that Elliot Street is already very busy. Your recommended realignment of traffic flows should not proceed until there is a diligent study of the potential impact on Elliot Street.
- 4) If a high volume of Sobeys in-bound traffic is routed down Elliot Street, which is only a side road, the road will need to be significantly improved, and widened to three lanes from Lindsay Street to the Tim's entrance, and in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Sobeys main entrance further east. There is little recognition of this problem and no

substantive analysis of such additional costs in your report. The viability and cost of the improvements that will be necessary if this planned realignment is to proceed should be diligently analyzed and articulated in your report.

- 5) All the rerouting plans make it much more complicated to ingress and egress from Sobeys and Tim's. This is not an improvement for community residents or businesses, and will not be well received.
- 6) Elliot Street, already seriously congested at times, is the main route to the public school. Additional traffic volume will be in conflict with school children, walking, being transported in private vehicles, and in multiple school buses.
- 7) A new traffic light closer to the high school, and the resulting additional traffic on Elliot Street, could create conflict with the pedestrian crossing being proposed for the high school.
- 8) Other measures should be considered first. For example, coordinating the current two traffic lights in town to make a more efficient flow at peak times, or adding an advance left turn signal coming out of Sobeys to accommodate southbound traffic concurrently with the existing advance left signal from Helen Street that accommodates northbound traffic. Consideration should also be given to having police directing traffic at busy times; this simple idea may provide relief without major structural changes or capital investment.
- 9) The premise for making any change at this intersection is that traffic volume creates congestion. This assumes that there will not be a reduction in traffic volume due to other traffic rerouting, such as the Baddow Bypass, or a second in-town crossing. As discussed below, we support both of these alternatives, which, if built, will reduce the need for any realignment of this intersection.

Summary – We are very concerned that your recommendations for realignment of this intersection will not improve the situation, and may very well create collateral complications. We suggest that you revisit your recommendations with our concerns in mind.

Baddow Bypass:

Your report recommends further study of this option. We support that recommendation wholeheartedly. This proposed bypass should be pursued and constructed as soon as possible for the following reasons:

- 1) It is technically feasible.
- 2) It will facilitate east/west traffic north of Fenelon. For example, it will greatly improve transportation between Coboconk and Bobcaygeon, so this is a benefit to a greater population of the City than just Fenelon.
- 3) It will divert heavy haulage away from Fenelon and Bobcaygeon. This will be a relief to the downtown core of Fenelon and facilitate the development of a more quaint and pedestrian-friendly downtown, one of the objectives of the Downtown Revitalization Plan adopted by Council. It will also be a benefit to Bobcaygeon by diverting heavy

haulage away from town. Furthermore, it will also alleviate road maintenance costs if heavy trucks are diverted to Highway #35.

- 4) It will divert heavy weekend through-traffic from both Fenelon and Bobcaygeon. As above, this will contribute to downtown revitalization and alleviate road wear.

Summary – Proceed as expeditiously as possible.

In-town Second Crossing:

This option is dismissed in your report in summary fashion with little analysis presented, when it is the only option that can substantively mitigate the basic problems that your study is intended to address. Your report appears to not evaluate the viability and importance of this option, and it reaches conclusions based on assumptions without analysis. By dismissing this option you do not solve the problem that you were mandated to address and fundamentally fail to present to Council fully analyzed and costed options for their consideration. We strongly urge you to reconsider your recommendation.

A second in-town crossing is urgent and essential for the following reasons:

- 1) It is the only option that can reroute a substantial volume of traffic from the single bridge crossing. As your report indicates, the single bridge is headed for gridlock, so dismissing a second in-town crossing now only dooms Fenelon to a dismal future.
- 2) It is technically feasible today, but will be more difficult in the future as further development proceeds and land is harder to acquire. It must not be dismissed just because it is technically challenging, since anything is possible with appropriate engineering.
- 3) It should have no impact on boating.
- 4) It should have minimal impact on the environment.
- 5) It will support current traffic demands as well as future development. It has been called for in numerous studies, including the Business Retention and Expansion Study, the Corridor Study and the Downtown Revitalization Plan. The community supports this option, and expects it to be taken seriously.
- 6) Delay will only add cost and complications. Kicking the can down the road is not acceptable.
- 7) A second crossing will add considerable value to emergency services in the event that crossing the single bridge is ever compromised by congestion or repair issues.
- 8) Cost considerations are for Council to consider, not the consultant. You owe a duty to the City to include a proper analysis and costing of this option without preemptively concluding that it is too expensive or complicated for consideration.
- 9) The significant benefits of a second crossing are not addressed in your report. This is not just about rerouting vehicular traffic, it is about pursuing the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to finally solve one of Fenelon's biggest problems. Benefits accruing from making this investment will include: greater business investment by the private sector, housing development, an increase in real estate values and the City's tax base, and a

revitalization of the whole town. Your report should account for these potential benefits in a cost/benefit analysis. All of these potential benefits will be stifled by failure to pursue this option.

- 10) This option should be explored concurrently with the Baddow Bypass option, since there is no guarantee that the Baddow Bypass option will proceed.
- 11) Failure to pursue this option in a current time frame will likely mean that it will never be built. Current problems will worsen. This will amount to relegation of the Fenelon community, citizens and businesses to second-tier status in CKL, possibly forever. This would be a very disappointing and discouraging outcome for the Fenelon community, especially in view of the tremendous business and volunteer efforts that have been undertaken in the past many years to make Fenelon a more vibrant and successful community. The community will likely feel abandoned if no effort is made to invest in Fenelon's future. We implore government officials and their advisors to properly address the needs of the citizens and taxpayers of Fenelon Falls by pursuing this option, and to have the courage and foresight to invest in the community's future while the opportunity is at hand. This would be for the great benefit of Fenelon, and the City as a whole.

Summary – We suggest that you revisit your recommendation regarding a second in-town crossing and find a way to make it work, not reasons for it not to work. We would appreciate it if your analysis would include data, and diligent cost and benefit analysis. This is the only option that supports the future economic health and vitality of Fenelon Falls. Council must be given the opportunity to consider the merits of this investment without a preemptive dismissal from the consultant.

Widening the Bridge

There was little discussion of this option in your presentation, it being summarily concluded that this option was no longer being considered. That preemptive judgement is of concern, since there could be significant benefit from adding a third lane to the bridge, thereby adding storage capacity to the southbound left turn into Sobeys and the northbound left turn on to Water Street. This option should be diligently analyzed, and options presented to Council for decision. In any event, the pedestrian sidewalk on the bridge should be widened and relocated to the east side.

All of the above is respectfully submitted for your consideration by the following signatories, who have approved this submission.

Sincerely,

Fenelon Falls Chamber of Commerce

Fenelon Forward

Downtown Revitalization Committee

Chris Handley

Chris Appleton

Lynne Manning

Jim Armstrong

Tim Wisener

Mike Barkwell

Alan Englestad

Sandra Barrett

Mark Knoester, Sobeys

Chris Bays, Tim Hortons