



April 9, 2015
BTE13-001

Response to Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA)
info@chnaottawa.ca

Dear CHNA:

Re: PIC 2 Comments - Preliminary Design and Environmental Assessment Study for the Rehabilitation/Replacement of Ottawa Queensway Mid-town bridges from Holland to O'Connor GWP# 4075-11-00

Thank you for attending the second PIC for the Queensway Mid-town Bridges project on February 26, 2015. We are in receipt of your comments and they will form part of the Record of Consultation that will be recorded in the EA.

We are providing the following responses to your questions/comments and we have included both your comments (shaded) and our responses below.

Comment 1: The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) has a great interest in five of the bridges to be rehabilitated as they are adjacent to the Civic Hospital neighbourhood: Holland, Parkdale, Fairmont, Bayswater and CPR/O-Train. The underpasses associated with these bridges serve as important connections between the primarily residential Civic Hospital neighbourhood and the adjacent Hintonburg neighbourhood with its homes, shops and services. Unfortunately, the bridge underpasses are currently dark tunnels that are unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists and they encourage the passage of excessive, speeding, cut-through vehicle traffic through the residential neighbourhoods.

These bridges could be replaced or rehabilitated, as per the Notice of Public Information. The decision has been made that the bridges adjacent to the Civic Hospital neighbourhood will be rehabilitated. The rehabilitation of these bridges offers a wonderful opportunity to implement some urban planning opportunities and design more welcoming neighbourhood connectors. This opportunity should be used as an important strategic stage towards transitioning the streets into modern, complete, urban streets (such as Laurier Avenue) with safer and more pleasant environments. At the same time, this will help both the Hintonburg and Civic Hospital Neighbourhoods manage the traffic that uses the bridge underpasses.

Response 1: To improve the safety under these bridges the MTO are proposing to include context sensitive measures in collaboration with the City of Ottawa to improve the openness of the bridges. This will include landscaping, greater lighting and bridge architectural details on the bridge facades. To date the City has been a stakeholder in the EA study and the MTO will continue to work with the City as the project proceeds to the detail design stage.

Comment 2: Issue: The bridge tunnels are currently dark, claustrophobic and sinister corridors. While they should function as welcoming gateways for pedestrians between the Hintonburg and Civic Hospital neighbourhoods, they are now unwelcoming barriers.

Mitigation:

- 1) Ensure that the tunnels under the bridges are designed to be as bright as possible (using both lighting and white/light construction materials). This will help make the bridge underpass sites safer, brighter and more open.
- 2) Consider innovative lighting such as lighted bollards.
- 3) Ensure that the refurbished underpasses will be “paintable” for community-sponsored mural work.

Response 2: MTO welcomes any community to provide comments on the context sensitive plans for the rehabilitated bridges. These are all positive suggestions for the context sensitive design plans being developed. Any community which wishes to go beyond these works with elements from the community can, by permit, extend the works within the Ministry’s right-of-way.

Comment 3: Issue: Pedestrians and cyclists are subjected to excessive noise, fumes and spray from vehicles speeding through the tunnels.

Mitigation:

- 1) Increase the size of the sidewalks through the tunnels to provide pedestrians with sufficient space to distance themselves from the speeding vehicles, while at the same time leaving sufficient room for dedicated cycling lanes. CHNA suggests that MTO work with residents (pedestrians, cyclists and drivers) to determine the appropriate height and size of the sidewalks. This would also serve to be a traffic calming measure for this local street.
- 2) Design the tunnels sides/walls to easily accommodate murals or designs that would encourage vehicles to slow down. Residents have suggested waves of colour or a clothesline design as ideas to discourage graffiti and encourage residents to add their own creative pictures.
- 3) Work with the City of Ottawa to design road surfaces under the bridges (alternate pavement, pavers, etc.) that encourage traffic to slow down and therefore improve the pedestrian and cycling experience under the bridges.
- 4) Work with the City of Ottawa to fix the very poor drainage in the Bridge underpasses. The Bayswater bridge has been specifically identified by residents as a “flood” location that must be addressed.
- 5) Consider designing sidewalks that are clearly distinguished from the road pavement using a greater height differential (make the sidewalks higher), different materials and bollards.

Response 3: The City would be the proponent of any change to the cross-section of the streets that pass beneath the Queensway. There is only a limited amount of space available for those streets. The City is welcome to propose changes in the use of that available space. The ability to widen bridges for replacement structures has been considered under the EA and not been carried forward. To do so requires a more complicated and risky rapid replacement technology and adds a significant higher capital cost to the bridge projects. Any consideration of longer bridges to accommodate municipal needs would be at the cost of the City and to date this has not been requested. This approach is provincial policy applied to all MTO projects across the Province. The MTO have proposed to include context sensitive design elements in the project to provide greater openness and safety for users of the municipal streets below the Queensway.

Comment 4: Issue: The bridges are located in residential communities, but they are currently industrial, poorly-designed eyesores and the noise and visual barriers (on the south side of the bridges) are inadequate. A noise reduction barrier was added to the north side of the Queensway between Loretta and Preston, but not the south side despite the fact that both sides of the Queensway are residential neighbourhoods. Residents south

of the Queensway report that the noise from this cross-town highway significantly and negatively affects their quality of life.

Mitigation:

- 1) Install more attractive and better functioning noise and visual barriers (natural barriers such as cedars are preferred for soft landscaping) on and around the bridges to protect the adjacent residents/homes from the noise and light pollution into the neighbourhood from the Queensway traffic.
- 2) CHNA does not support clear barriers along the bridges as they would only increase the “visual pollution” from the Queensway traffic.
- 3) Design the noise and visual barriers to allow for the potential of future signage (such as the Little Italy neon signs on Preston Street).

Response 4: The scope of the current EA study is to define a bridge management plan for the 23 bridges under study. The MTO planning for the noise barrier replacement program will be delivered by another project. Regarding the clear barrier, in some locations it may be required for structural reasons as they are lighter than standard panels.

We thank you for these comments and they will be considered as part of the noise barrier project.

Comment 5: Issue: The landscaping around the bridges is virtually non-existent. The un-maintained lands around the bridges are frequently used as dumps for garbage and detract from, when they should enhance, the attractiveness of the underpasses. Improved landscaping should be a consistent feature for all bridges as it enhances the beauty of the neighbourhood and shows respect for residents in the immediate vicinity of the bridges. These lands can also contribute to a healthy urban tree canopy.

Mitigation:

- 1) Use planned, innovative landscape design around the bridges that discourages the dumping of garbage. Before the last construction activity at the bridge, the south slope was filled with hollyhocks, a perennial flower.
- 2) Consider adding a soft landscaping “policy” that allows/accommodates community-sponsored public art in the future.
- 3) Ensure that maintenance and grooming of the greenspaces around the bridges is funded over the long term.

Response 5: MTO welcomes any community to provide comments on the context sensitive plans for the rehabilitated bridges. These are all positive suggestions for the context sensitive design plans being developed. Any community which wishes to go beyond these works with elements from the community can, by permit, extend the works within the Ministry’s right-of-way.

Comment 6: Issue: Many of the streets under the bridges (such as Bayswater Avenue) are designated City of Ottawa cycling routes, yet cyclists are currently threatened by speeding traffic as they move through the tunnels.

Mitigation: Ensure that the ratio of sidewalk / cycling lanes / road surface under the bridges is designed to accommodate future “complete streets”, including installing physical barriers to separate cyclists from vehicle traffic (see Laurier Avenue West as an example of a complete street).

Response 6: As above, the City would be the proponent of any change to the cross-section of the streets that pass beneath the Queensway. There is only a limited amount of space available for those streets. The City is welcome to propose changes in the use of that available space. The ability to widen bridges for replacement structures has been considered under the EA and not been carried forward. To do so requires a more complicated and risky rapid replacement technology and adds a significant higher capital cost to the bridge projects. Any consideration of longer bridges to accommodate municipal needs would be at the cost of the City and to date this has not been requested. This approach is provincial policy applied to all MTO projects across the Province. The MTO have proposed to include context sensitive design elements in the project to provide greater openness and safety for users of the municipal streets below the Queensway.

Comment 7: Issue: The Preston-Carling Secondary Plan, approved in 2014 by Ottawa City Council, included a Multi-use Pathway (MUP) on both sides of the O-Train Corridor (at the CPR/O-Train Bridge). Private developers have already committed to build segments of this path as part of Section 37 benefits. It is included in the Preston-Carling and draft Gladstone CDPs. The City of Ottawa is encouraging residents to consider cycling as a regular mode of transit, including approving a student residence on Champagne Avenue that does not include parking. However, the current design does not include a MUP on the west side of the CPR/O-Train Bridge.

Mitigation: Revisit the design of the CPR/O-Train Bridge to include MUPs on both the east and west sides of the bridge. This is a commitment to residents by the City of Ottawa that must be respected.

Response 7: This replacement bridge is being planned in a collaborative manner to span all existing uses under the Queensway.

The potential for a west side Multi-use Pathway (MUP) at the O-Train bridge was raised as an issue at the first round of public consultation. We understand that residents have also brought this to the City's attention; however, in our discussions with the City, they have indicated that they have no desire to fund a west side path. Further to the above, we note there are challenges in providing a pathway on the west side of the O-Train Structure. These include substantial additional costs, not only in initial capital costs but in the future life-cycle costs of maintaining the additional area of the structure, property, and finding a suitable area for a pathway. The topography in the area would suggest that retaining walls or a similar engineering solution would be required regardless of there being an opening at the O-Train Structure.

Yours very truly,



Steve Taylor P.Eng., Project Manager

Copy: Don Rowat, MTO Project Manager
Andrew Harkness, Environmental Manager