

## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

# Oxford Road 19 Road Reconstruction Municipal Class Environmental Assessment Study

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Public Works

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. That County Council authorize Public Works Staff to proceed with Alternative 5 – improve road structure, widen the Right-of-Way and implement widened, partially paved shoulders – as the preferred alternative solution for the Oxford Road 19 Reconstruction Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) Study as summarized in Report No. PW 2023-43;
2. And further, that County Council authorize Public Works Staff to issue a Notice of Completion and post the Schedule C Environment Study Report for the Oxford Road 19 Reconstruction Class EA Study in the public record for 30 days in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class EA process.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval of the preferred alternative solution for the Oxford Road 19 (OR 19) Reconstruction Class EA Study (from Highway 19 to Windham Line, excluding the Villages of Otterville and Springford) and to issue the Notice of Completion which triggers the mandatory 30-day public review period.
- The recommended preferred alternative solution includes property acquisition along the OR 19 corridor to accommodate the required widening of the Right-of-Way (ROW).

## IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

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Following Council's adoption of this report, a Notice of Study Completion will be published in the local newspapers and County website. The Notice will be mailed to the public, as well as groups of interest (property owners, review agencies, Area Municipalities, Councillors, Indigenous Communities, etc.).

The Notice will inform the public and interested parties of the completion of the Class EA Study project and the start of the minimum 30-day public review period of the Class EA Study Environmental Study Report (ESR). If no Section 16 order requests are received during the 30-day review period, staff shall commence the process of formulating budgetary plans and executing future endeavours, including but not limited to land acquisition, design, and construction.

## **Financial Impact**

The recommendations outlined in this report do not entail an immediate financial impact.

However, it is imperative for Council to remain cognizant of the prospective fiscal ramifications associated with the forthcoming project. Presently, preliminary high-level planning estimates suggest that the anticipated cost for the road improvement initiative, encompassing property acquisition, utility relocation, detailed design, and construction, is approximately \$30 million. These cost estimates are expected to undergo further refinement in the ensuing years as the detailed design and planning phase advances.

This project will be incorporated into the 2024 Development Charges (DC) Background Study to determine its eligibility for DC Funding. The estimated expenditures and funding sources for this project will be integrated into the 2024 business plan and budget, constituting an integral component of the long-term capital plan forecast.

## **Communications**

Consultation with the public, property owners, review agencies and other impacted stakeholders early and often throughout the process is a key component of any Class EA Study. All interested parties were notified and consulted early and often throughout the development and evaluation of alternative solutions to recommend the preferred alternative solution.

The following is a summary of consultation activities:

- A Notice of Study Commencement (NOCm) was advertised in the *Oxford Review* (March 17 and 24, 2022). The NOCm was delivered to 317 property owners or occupants within the vicinity of the Study Area as well as to 46 agency contacts, organizations, local utility companies and Indigenous Communities who may have been interested in the project.
- A copy of the NOCm and Notice of Public Consultation Center 1 (June 9, 2022) and Public Consultation Center 2 (December 6, 2022) was provided to Area Municipal staff (Township of South-West Oxford, Township of Norwich).
- Meeting(s) and correspondence with Long Point Region Conservation Authority, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), Indigenous Communities and other stakeholders.
- A dedicated project website, <https://www.oxfordcounty.ca/en/news/oxford-road-19-corridor-improvements-class-ea-study.aspx>, was created to make information about the study publicly available and to provide the opportunity for members of the public who could not attend public meetings to see all documents presented and to advise of future consultation events.

County staff reviewed and gave careful consideration to all public feedback including comment forms, e-mail and written correspondence. Staff will continue the communication efforts during the forthcoming planning, design and construction phases to effectively mitigate any potential impacts associated with the project. Ongoing discussions with the Area Municipalities (Township of South-West Oxford, Township of Norwich) will be maintained throughout the project.




Report No. PW 2023-43 will be circulated to Area Municipalities for information.

## **2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

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Oxford County Council approved the **2023-2026 Strategic Plan** on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report supports the following Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals:

		
<b>Promoting community vitality</b>	<b>Enhancing environmental sustainability</b>	<b>Fostering progressive government</b>
Goal 1.4 – Connected people and places		Goal 3.1 – Continuous improvement and results-driven solutions

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

## **DISCUSSION**

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### **Background**

As shown in Attachment 1, the Study Area includes approximately 16 km of OR 19 between Highway 19 (Plank Line – MTO right of way) and Windham Line (Norfolk County boundary). It is predominately bounded by both residential and agricultural properties to the north and south. OR 19 is also referred to as “Ostrander Road” in the Township of South-West Oxford and is referred to as “Otterville Road” in the Township of Norwich. The Study Area also skips over settlements within the area, Villages of Springford and Otterville, as road corridor improvements were implemented in these areas under previous projects.

OR 19 presently bears seasonal load restrictions during the Spring season, posing challenges to the transportation of goods. At the southern boundary of the Township of Norwich, there exists a substantial expanse of industrial lands, largely untapped and underutilized, which would significantly benefit from the removal of these load constraints. Furthermore, the establishment of additional connections to Oxford Road 13, Oxford Road 59, Highway 19 and Tillsonburg would enhance accessibility and bolster economic prospects in the vicinity.

Additionally, the OR 19 corridor is home to several prominent agri-businesses and industrial facilities, all of which currently face limitations on road usage during the Spring due to load restrictions. The proposed improvements in connectivity would redress this issue, offering newfound accessibility and facilitating economic growth.

Furthermore, certain segments of the road exhibit sightlines that fall short of current safety standards. Consequently, the design for these enhancements will take into consideration potential adjustments to horizontal and vertical alignments to enhance safety along the corridor.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the current width of the road's ROW does not align with the County's stipulated guidelines, as delineated in the Official Plan. To improve connectivity within the local Townships surrounding OR 19 and support the neighbouring businesses, a comprehensive widening and reconstruction of the road and ROW are imperative. These measures are designed not only to conform to County standards but also to ensure the safe and efficient movement of both people and goods through the year 2046.

## Comments

### Study Process

The OR 19 Reconstruction Class EA Study was undertaken by County staff in the Spring of 2022 with the assistance of engineering and technical consultants (R.J. Burnside & Associates Limited; Archaeological Resources Inc.). The Class EA Study was carried out as a Schedule 'C' activity in full accordance with the Municipal Class EA process. Proponents planning to undertake Schedule 'C' activities are required to complete Phases 1 to 5 of the Municipal Class EA process as outlined in Attachment 2.

### Evaluation of Alternative Solutions

The Class EA Study project team identified five preliminary alternative solutions to the problem statement, summarized in Attachment 3 and described in detail below:

- **Alternative 1 – Do nothing:** This alternative would involve the continued operation of the existing roadway and ROW without any improvements or changes to the existing infrastructure.
- **Alternative 2 – Provide regular road maintenance:** This alternative would involve the maintenance of the road and shoulders to maintain acceptable surface conditions (i.e. crack sealing, gravel shouldering, resurfacing work). Under this alternative, the road will continue to operate as a two-way road fully open to the public with no major rehabilitation, reconstruction or widening. Routine operational maintenance will be performed as required. Half-load restrictions will continue to be applied in the Spring.

- **Alternative 3 – Improve road structure within existing ROW:** This alternative would provide a two-lane road to County requirements with gravel shoulders. The pavement structure will be improved to remove half-load restrictions in the Spring. A minor amount of widening within the existing ROW is proposed on the travel lanes to improve safety.
- **Alternative 4 – Widen ROW, widen and partially pave shoulders:** This alternative would provide a two-lane road to County requirements with a paved/gravel shoulder. No improvement of pavement structure to remove half-load restrictions in the Spring is proposed. The ROW will be widened to meet the Official Plan requirement of 30.5m.
- **Alternative 5 – Improve road structure, widen ROW, widen and partially pave shoulders:** This alternative would provide a two-lane road to County requirements with a paved/gravel shoulder. The pavement structure will be improved to remove half-load restrictions in the Spring. The ROW will be widened to meet the Official Plan requirement of 30.5m.

The list of alternative solutions was generated by taking into consideration the Study Area conditions and County Road / ROW upgrade requirements. As shown in Table 1, an analysis of the list of alternative solutions was undertaken based on potential related impacts to the natural environment, cultural, social-economic, technical and financial criteria.

Table 1: Comparative Evaluation of Alternative Solutions

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES	Alternative 1: Do Nothing	Alternative 2: Provide regular road maintenance	Alternative 3: Improve road structure within existing ROW	Alternative 4: Widen the ROW and widen partially pave shoulders	Alternative 5: Improve road structure, widen the ROW and widen and partially pave shoulders
PROBLEM STATEMENT (POS)	Does not meet POS	Partially meets POS	Partially meets POS	Partially meets POS	Meets POS
Natural Environment	●	●	○	○	○
Cultural Environment	●	●	●	●	●
Socio-Economic Environment	○	○	○	●	●
Technical Considerations	○	○	○	●	●
Financial Considerations	●	●	●	○	○
OVERALL SUMMARY	Not Carried Forward	Least Preferred	Moderately Preferred	Moderately Preferred	Most Preferred

ORDER OF PREFERENCE  
 Most Preferred ●  
 More Preferred ●  
 Moderately Preferred ○  
 Less Preferred ○  
 Least Preferred ○

### Selection of Preferred Solution and Design

The overall objective of the evaluation was to identify a Preferred Solution among the five alternatives identified in Table 1 that provides the most favourable solution to the Project Opportunity Statement. Based on the above, the Preferred Solution was recommended for the following reasons:

- Provides a two-lane road to County requirements with paved shoulder;
- Widened and partially paved shoulders to reduce maintenance and improve safety;
- Improvement of pavement structure to remove half-load restrictions in the spring.

In light of the preferred solution (Alternative 5), three design concepts (refer to Attachment 4) were then evaluated as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Evaluation of Alternative Design Concepts

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES	Alternative 1: Moderately-wide paved shoulders	Alternative 2: Minimally-wide paved shouldlers	Alternative 3: Maximally-wide paved shoulders
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	●	●	●
SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	●	●	●
TECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT	●	●	●
ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	●	●	●
OVERALL SUMMARY	Most Preferred	Least Preferred	Least Preferred

ORDER OF PREFERENCE

- Most Preferred ●
- More Preferred ●
- Moderately Preferred ●
- Less Preferred ●
- Least Preferred ○

The preferred design concept was recommended to be **Alternative 1: Moderately-wide paved shoulders** for the following reasons:

- Widening and structural improvements to remove the Spring half-load restrictions will help farms and businesses transport goods;
- Improves the safety for access to private properties and businesses through opportunities for smooth exit/entrance;
- Likely to reduce the frequency of preventive road maintenance treatments and gravel shoulder maintenance requirements;
- Paving of shoulders provides increased stabilization of the roadbed against adverse climatological events. Increased potential for active transportation can reduce the impacts of auto emissions on increasing greenhouse gases; and
- Meets the Official Plan ROW requirements and supports Active Transportation.

In accordance with the recommended preferred alternative solution, which entails the reconstruction and widening of OR 19, property acquisition (~11.75 hectares) will need to be undertaken as an integral component of this endeavour as shown in Attachment 5. Accordingly, all property owners have been duly informed of the proposed improvements for OR 19 and County staff members are actively engaged in ongoing dialogues to address any inquiries or feedback raised.

## CONCLUSIONS

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The Oxford Road 19 Reconstruction Class EA Study has fulfilled the requirements for Schedule 'C' activities under the Municipal Class EA process such that, with Council's approval, a Notice of Study Completion can now be issued and the mandatory 30-day public review period will be commenced.

Public Works staff believes that the recommended preferred solution and design for the OR 19 Reconstruction Class EA Study - to widen the road and ROW, partially (moderately wide) pave the shoulders and implement structural improvements (Alternative Solution 5) – is the best solution from an environmental, social, economic and technical perspective.

## SIGNATURES

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### Report Author:

Original signed by:

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### Departmental Approval:

Original signed by:

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David Simpson, P.Eng., PMP  
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### Approved for submission:

Original signed by:

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## ATTACHMENTS

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- Attachment 1: Oxford County Key Plan
- Attachment 2: Municipal Class EA Study Process for Schedule C Undertakings
- Attachment 3: Alternative Solutions
- Attachment 4: Alternative Design Concepts
- Attachment 5: Proposed Property Acquisition