

Industrial and Wellington reconstruction set for May

By Brock Weir

Drivers using the Aurora GO Station might find the evening commute home a little bit easier this fall following the reconstruction of Industrial Parkway South and Wellington Street East.

Council is set to bring forward the reconstruction project, which will include new water mains, improvements to storm and sanitary sewers, and, of particular interest to commuters, a right hand turn lane onto Wellington Street to reduce traffic gridlock, this week after approving a \$113,000 boost to the project, which was originally approved last year.

Now totalling \$2,287,316.96, excluding taxes, should Council formally ratify the plan this week, construction is to begin May 2 and will be slated to run through October.

While Councillors approved the plan at the Committee level last week, they questioned whether now was the right time to go through with the reconstruction considering the Province's plan to overhaul the Aurora GO Station to allow for double-tracking in the not-too-distant future, as well whether the scope of the plan should include the northern side of the intersection as well.

?There could be some impact on this road and the project as we see it [with the GO expansion, but after some discussions with [infrastructure staff] it would appear it still makes a lot of sense to go ahead with this project, especially sidewalk alignment,? said Mayor Geoff Dawe. ?With increased traffic at GO, I think that just makes sense, but [this is] just to be aware in the future that five or six years down the road, no doubt GO will be coming in and making some changes as they go along.?

Mayor Dawe cautioned Council to keep that issue in the backs of their minds, but Councillors moved this issue to the forefront, with Councillor Michael Thompson asking whether there would be any safeguards to the work Aurora carries out now by the time the Province moves in with their plans.

?I have certainly heard of their interest in a number of different things around there, given the demands for parking, and so forth, around it,? said Councillor Thompson, asking Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, if there was a way to mitigate any damages that might happen on the road. ?The concern, of course, is we spend all this money on a brand new road and two or three years [later] dump trucks are rolling back and forth and there might be some damages.?

Any future work, said Mr. Simanovskis, would require an access agreement with Metrolinx, the Provincial body which oversees GO Transit.

?GO has been a reasonable partner with coordination and with other issues and opportunities that have happened around this site, so I don't see there being any challenges and I would hope that the relationship continues as they advance and do more construction on these properties,? said Mr. Simanovskis. ?We will definitely keep those communication lines open and make sure we have their cooperation.?

With this out of the way, focus then turned to the north leg of Industrial Parkway.

Councillor Tom Mrakas, who proposed a study last year which would have looked at the widening of the thoroughfare to serve as a Yonge Street bypass, the original purpose of Industrial Parkway, questioned why this project wouldn't look at the other side of the intersection as well.

Mr. Simanovskis concurred this is something they need to look at, and there will be opportunities down the road once they receive a planning application for the northeast corner of Wellington and Industrial Parkway. That corner, currently occupied by Aurora Wheel & Tire and Royal Woodworking, is expected to be subject of a new plan from the property owners to transform the land into a multi-storey condominium complex.

Waiting until those plans come forward will allow the Town to coordinate land acquisitions to transform the intersection.

?The biggest traffic issue is when GO lets out in the south parking lot and spills onto Industrial,? said Mr. Simanovskis. ?A very large volume of that traffic wants to turn right, so this focuses on a very large right turn lane to allow traffic that wants to go straight or left to have that additional access. Right now, all the right turn traffic is holding up through traffic so you have a longer lineup.

?That is where the pinch point is. However, we do recognize there is also some demand southbound. They are also expensive projects, so we're trying to phase them so we're not spending three or four million dollars on one location. We're trying to look at where the demands are and build that infrastructure to meet those demands as the demands grow.?