

MTO stats show two-lane Highway 10 busier in 2013 than when widened in 1994

Ontario's Transportation ministry has confirmed that three years ago traffic volumes on Highway 10's two lanes between Camilla and Primrose were well above levels when the road was widened to four lanes to Camilla in 1994.

But despite the likelihood that volumes have grown substantially since 2013 with the rapid growth of population in Shelburne, the ministry confirmed that it has no plans to make any safety improvements on the roadway beyond bowing to pressure for left turn lanes at one intersection.

Asked by the Citizen why a project planned for 2017 and 2018 involves only resurfacing and some bridge and culvert work rather than the long-awaited widening, Emilia Kuisma, communications coordinator for MTO's West Region in London, replied: "This project is being done to address the pavement condition along Highway 10 between Orangeville and Primrose. As part of the project, we assessed the operations of the intersections to determine if any operational improvements were needed. As a result, left turn lanes are planned to be added at the Mono Road 20 intersection.

"While the traffic volume along Highway 10 between Camilla and Primrose is approaching a level that would prompt consideration of widening, there are no plans to expand the highway at this time. The ministry will continue to monitor traffic growth and operations."

Asked for information on current traffic volumes and those when the highway was widened up to Camilla, Kuisma said the most recent data she had was for 2013, when the annual average daily traffic was 23,200 between First Street and Hockley Road (which has been four lanes since the 1980s), 13,500 between Hockley Road and Camilla and 13,400 between Camilla and Highway 89 at Primrose.

In 1994, when the widening was completed to Camilla, the annual average daily traffic between First Street and Hockley Road was 16,500 vehicles, compared with 11,400 between Hockley Road and Camilla and only 8,800 between Camilla and Primrose. In other words, traffic volumes on the two-lane portion of the highway had soared by 4,600 vehicles or 52 per cent in the 19-year period.

But when asked whether the Ministry has an accepted standard for when a two-lane highway warrants widening to four lanes, Kuisma replied: "Highway widening is based upon a number of factors, some of which include traffic volumes, traffic distribution and the amount of commercial traffic. Once a portion of highway is identified for expansion it is then prioritized provincially for further study and is subject to availability of funds."

The project as currently planned was discussed at Mono council recently. Later, Mono Deputy Mayor Ken McGhee said he expected the need for widening to four lanes plus a fifth lane at all intersections would be raised at Dufferin County council and that one or both councils would ask Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to raise the issue in the Ontario Legislature when it re-opens.

In a report to Mono council, Public Works Director Michael Dunmore noted that the Town "has sent multiple letters to the MTO, Minister of Transportation and Members of Parliament highlighting concerns for the safety of the travelling public along this stretch of Ministry-governed Highway."

"Research of Town records indicates these letters date back as far 2003, but I believe it goes on further than that. A common theme of these letters asked the Ministry to look into intersection lighting, installation of turning lanes, improved notification signage for left turning traffic and removal of blind spots when turning from Town roads onto the highway and vice versa."

"Some of these letters have received positive outcomes and MTO capital works have included some of our issues over the years, but the majority receive comments back that the Ministry warrants for upgrades have not been met to trigger such an upgrade."

He said the a recent letter dealt with the need for turning lanes at Campbell Road and the entrance to Mono Plaza.

"Their commitment was that during the course of this summer the need for other improvements within the project limits would be evaluated as the study advances," he said.

He disclosed that Aug. 4 representatives from the MTO, MTO Design Consultants, Orangeville Fire, Dufferin OPP, Orangeville Public Works, Dufferin County Public Works and Town of Mono Public Works met "to discuss any concerns we may have with the upcoming rehabilitation of this Highway."

"At this meeting, I was sure to and did reiterate the years of residential complaints and firmly portrayed council's concerns as contained in the many letters," he stated.

Perhaps the most interesting letter in the documents before council was written in December 2004 by then-mayor Keith Thompson to the MTO's regional director, in which he cited an Oct. 18, 2004 letter from the ministry's Traffic Operations Analyst announcing a decision to install left-turn lanes at 20 Sideroad.

Later in the letter, the mayor returned to the subject: "As stated previously, we are pleased with the decision to install a left-turn lane

at 20 Sideroad and Highway 10.?

Dunmore's report to council at the Aug. 4 meeting included a letter he had sent MTO summarizing the ministry's position that none of the improvements requested by Mono were warranted.

In particular, regarding the need for left turn lanes, ?The Ministry confirmed that the current scope of the project did not include such works, and warrants for turning lanes for the entire stretch of Highway did not exist.?