

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
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REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. Your File/V/Réf.	48-95-0104
DATE	17 April 2000
TO/DEST.	Co-ordinator Transportation Committee
FROM/EXP.	Planning and Development Approvals Commissioner
SUBJECT/OBJET	TERRY FOX DRIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT STUDY - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Transportation Committee recommend to Council that:

Upon approval of the alignment of Terry Fox Drive as recommended in the Environmental Assessment Study, staff be directed to examine the lands between Alignment 4-1 and the existing urban area boundary to determine appropriate land use designations and policies for the Regional Official Plan amendment establishing the new alignment of Terry Fox Drive.

INTRODUCTION

At the Transportation Committee meeting on March 1, 2000, the following resolution was passed:

“WHEREAS this report is focused primarily on the transportation aspects of the various Terry Fox drive alignments;

RESOLVED THAT approval of this report be deferred until Council has had the opportunity to consider a report from the Planning Department on the planning and development implications of the various alignments.”

This report responds to the Motion by providing a general description of the areas impacted by the alignments from a planning perspective, and a discussion of the environmental and urban development

issues raised by the various alignments, in particular the recommended alignment 4-1 which lies outside of the urban policy area.

The choice of alignment 4-1 does raise development issues. It will likely lead to requests to add agricultural and environmental lands to the urban policy area. This in turn will lead to the need to ensure protection of the environmental areas between alignments 4-1 and 4-2, and address need, justification, and appropriate land use designations for any additional urban land.

Several approaches are discussed to address this concern with a recommended process involving:

- approving the proposed alignment 4-1 and completion of the ESR
- additional work to confirm and assess environmental areas and implications over the coming summer
- addressing the potential planning and development implications within the context of the amendment to reflect the proposed alignment in the Official Plan (anticipated in winter, 2001).

BACKGROUND

The Terry Fox Drive Environmental Assessment Study involved an extensive process which examined three basic alignment options, each of which raises different planning and development issues. These alignments are shown on Figure 1 which also indicates the current land use designations in the Regional Official Plan.

Alignment 4-3

This alignment offers the least impact on the natural environment in that it follows the existing Goulbourn Forced road. Although this option would have minimised additional intrusion of the road into relatively undisturbed environmental lands, alignment 4-3B would have still required significant expansion of the road corridor through the Trillium Woods natural area.

These options would result in a major arterial road bisecting an existing and proposed urban community. This was a major concern during the environmental assessment study and was judged to be a significant enough community impact to outweigh other potential factors involved in the selection of a preferred alignment. It may still be possible to use alignment 4-3A as the future local road connection and close that portion of the road which bisects Trillium Woods, thereby creating some net environmental gain in that area.

Alignments 4-1 and 4-2

Regardless of whether alignment 4-1 or 4-2 is chosen, woodlands associated with the South March Highland will be lost and indirect disturbance will occur as a result of the road corridor bisecting woodland areas.

Alignment 4-2 follows the existing First Line Road allowance and therefore provides the benefit of following a route that has been disturbed in the past. However, this road allowance travels through the middle of woodland areas associated with the Hazeldean Escarpment and Cathedral Grove. These woodlands have been identified as high priority environmental areas and are protected with a Natural Environment Area 'A' designation within the existing urban policy area. If this alignment is not chosen, the current road allowance can continue to revert to a more natural landscape creating, in combination with the existing environmental designations in the urban area, larger contiguous natural areas.

Alignment 4-1 diverges from the 4-2 alignment to drop below the escarpment area into cleared land. It crosses the above noted environmental features at a narrower point. While still bisecting the Hazeldean Escarpment, it provides greater opportunities to minimize damage by taking advantage of some gaps in the significant features. However, this alignment is beyond the existing urban policy area and raises issues related to future planning in an area which is currently subject to agricultural and environmental designations.

Alignment 4-1 - Implications for the Urban Area Boundary

Choosing alignment 4-1 will likely lead to requests to change the urban area boundary and add the lands between alignment 4-1 and 4-2 (about 115 hectares) to the urban policy area. These lands are designated in the Regional Official Plan as Natural Environment Area (B) and Agricultural Resource (see Figure 1).

To examine potential planning and development implications, it is useful to divide the lands into 5 general areas as shown on Figure 2. In describing these areas, reference is made to previous work completed by Dan Brunton (1992) for the City of Kanata which examined environmental features and preservation priorities in the South March Highlands.

1. This is a rocky area with some tree cover which is currently Agricultural Resource in the Regional Official Plan. During the Official Plan, it was assessed as part of the larger farm parcel. It is not, however, prime agricultural land and if it is isolated from the remainder of the farm area by Terry Fox, it would be difficult to justify maintaining an agricultural designation. It has not been included in any of the South March Highlands environmental work completed to date and some work should be completed in determining future use.
2. This area consists of a portion which is essentially cleared (2a) and an area which is wooded and has a core natural woodland along with rocky slopes (2b). Brunton (1992) described this woodland as a dry outcrop forest with conifer dominants. That study suggested that the core woodland be considered a moderate priority for preservation. Immediately east of this area, there is a general urban designation on similar lands within Kanata Lakes.
3. This area contains the most significant environmental features in the area, the Hazeldean Escarpment and Cathedral Woods. The Brunton study suggested that these were high priority areas and noted that it was "a unique landscape for Kanata with abundant rock barrens intermixed upland hardwood forest, including sub-mature maple forest; important year-round hunting and migration route for

raptors; large stand of white pine (Cathedral Grove) in young Sugar Maple forest; significant flora on slopes and summit....” It is similar to the Natural Environment Area A to the east.

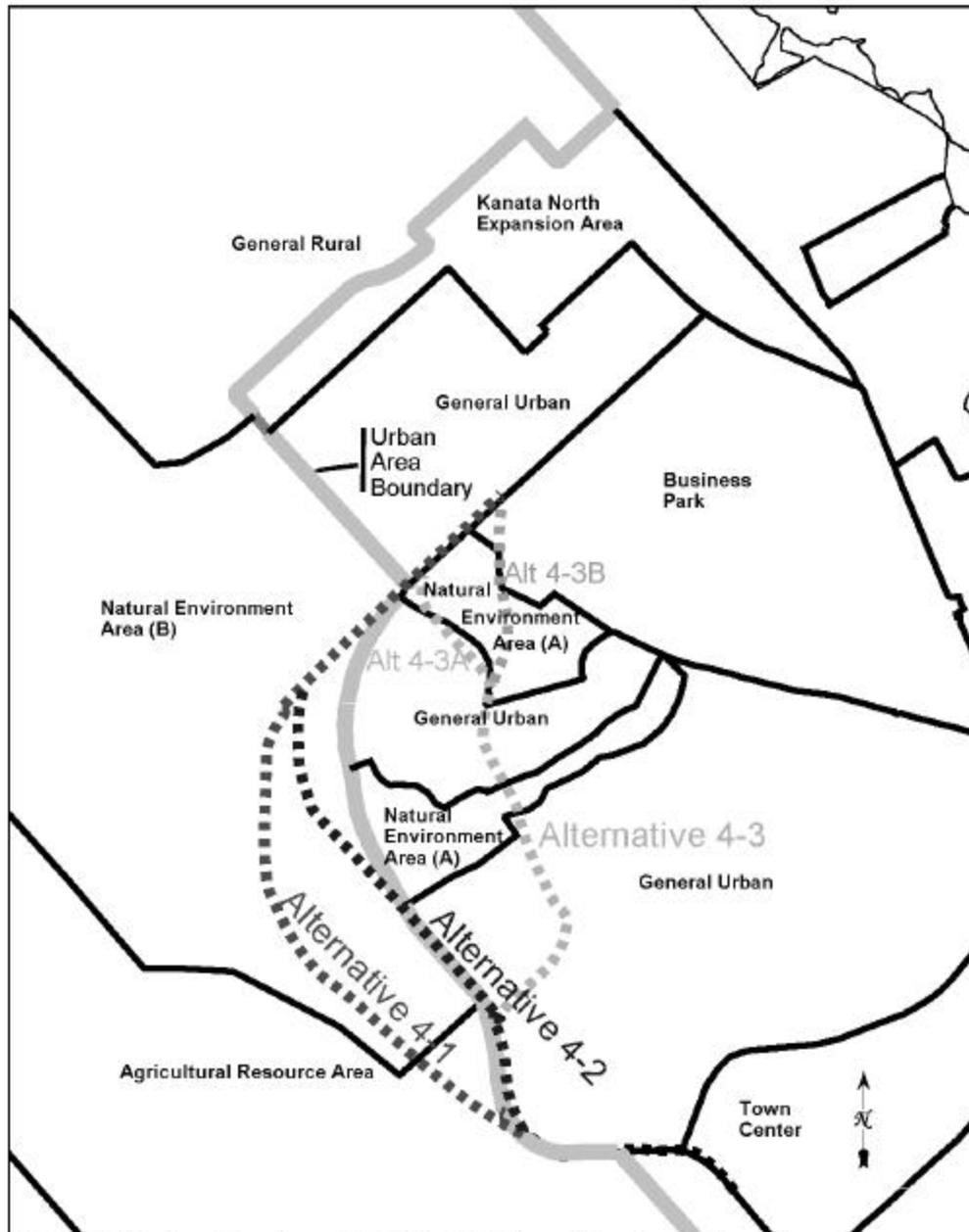


FIGURE 1 - Regional Official Plan Designations
Terry Fox Drive Alternative Alignments

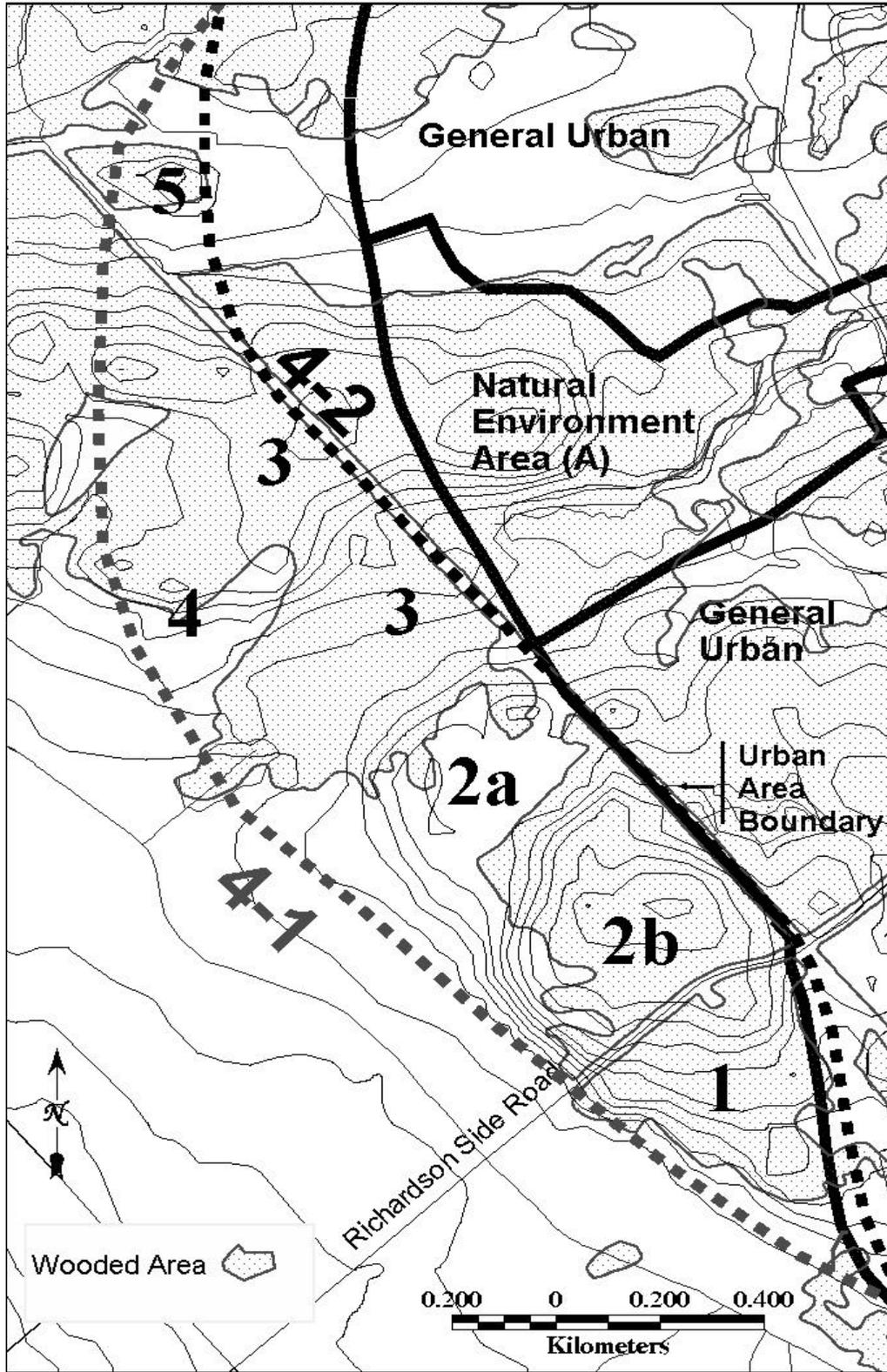


FIGURE 2 Land Around Alternatives 4-1 and 4-2

4. This area is a mix of woodland, scrubland, old field habitat, and some lowland and swamp areas. There is a Natural Environment Area A designation within the existing urban area to the east. It also connects the land east of the proposed Terry Fox extension to the portions of the Hazeldean Escarpment which extend west of alignment 4-1 and up into the remainder of the South March Highlands.
5. This area consists of thicket swamp/marsh complex, old field, early successional deciduous swamp forest, and deciduous forest. The area has a stream corridor and some shield wetlands which would need to be recognised during any future land use proposals. The area immediately east of this land is designated general urban.

Further study would be needed to refine and update previous work prior to confirming more specific land use designations and boundaries. Based on existing information, there are significant environmental features and values in area 3 and portions of areas 4 and 5 while areas 1 and 2 have fewer environmental features.

DISCUSSION

There are two major planning issues involved in the alignment choice. The first is the potential environmental impact and the steps required to minimise this impact, and the second is the implications in terms of future planning and development and the urban policy area.

In terms of the potential environmental impact, these issues were examined during the Environmental Assessment Study Process. This was an extensive assessment process which concluded that 4-1 was the technically preferred alignment. Alignment 4-1 has been located to cross through the Hazeldean Escarpment at a relatively narrow location. It also presents some opportunities to retain larger woodland and environmental features associated with the Hazeldean Escarpment and Cathedral Woods. However, these benefits will only be realised if the additional environmental areas located between alignments 4-1 and 4-2 are protected.

From the planning perspective, there are three potential approaches that could be taken:

1. Approve alignment 4-1 and maintain the combination of Natural Environment Area B and Agricultural Resource Area. These are rural designations. The likely result would be requests to amend the urban area boundary. A Regional Official Plan amendment would still be required to show the alignment of Terry Fox Drive on Schedules C1 and D1 in the Regional Official Plan and the urban area boundary would likely become an issue during that process.
2. Approve all aspects of the EA except for the choice between alignment 4-1 and 4-2 and begin work to define the level of environmental protection required in the area between alignments 4-1 and 4-2. The choice between 4-1 and 4-2 would then be made in conjunction with the proposed Regional Official Plan amendment establishing the new location of Terry Fox Drive and addressing issues related to the lands between alignments 4-1 and 4-2. However, this would make the

approval process for the EA uncertain and extend the process as filing and bump-up provisions would have to be phased. It would also have implications for the implementing Official Plan amendments which require an approved Environmental Assessment.

3. Approve alignment 4-1 and begin to examine the issues related to the potential urban boundary expansion and the possibility of some combination of urban and environmental designations on the land between alternatives 4-1 and 4-2. As can be seen from the description of the general nature of the land between alternatives 4-1 and 4-2, it is apparent that if Alignment 4-1 became the urban area boundary, the environmental features and values of the area being added varies. If this results in additional urban land, it would have to be justified in the context of the Regional Development Strategy. An Official Plan Amendment to establish new planning policies for the area as well as establishing the Terry Fox Drive alignment, would be required.

In staff's judgement, option 3 is the best course of action in that it allows completion of what has been a lengthy and extensive environmental assessment process which established alignment 4-1 as the preferred alternative. It also deals up-front with the likely planning issues around the approval of alignment 4-1, and proactively addresses concerns around the protection of environmental features and functions in the area between alignment 4-1 and the existing urban area boundary. Alignment 4-1 is also approximately 3.8 million dollars less expensive than alignment 4-2 and these savings could help with mitigation measures and a comprehensive environmental protection plan.

Upon approval of alignment 4-1 as recommended in the staff report on the Terry Fox Drive Environmental Assessment Study (dated Feb14, 2000), staff would initiate the following process:

- allow the environmental assessment process, including the required filing and bump-up periods, to proceed so that Alignment 4-1 can be confirmed (likely fall 2000).
- begin the required environment work for the environmental protection and management strategy immediately (this work is included as recommendation 3 in the Terry Fox Environmental Study report). This work will involve updating of past environmental studies, and a more detailed examination of lands within the Natural Environment Area (B) area to define the areas of environmental significance which should be accorded the highest level of protection, and those areas where environmental values are not as prominent and some form of development (under some conditions) is likely to be acceptable.
- upon confirmation of alignment 4-1, proceed with an amendment to the Regional Official Plan to recognise the new alignment and at the same time, address future land use designations and planning policy within the context of this amendment, expected in the first half of 2001.

In terms of timing for construction, the portion of Terry Fox Drive south of Richardson Sideroad is within the City of Kanata Development Charges bylaw indicating construction between 2003 and 2009. This would include the southern portion of alignment 4-1. North of Richardson Sideroad is noted as a being beyond 2009. The Regional Official Plan has not identified Terry Fox Drive as a Regional priority

before 2006. These timelines, however, will be dictated primarily by actual development needs and activities.

CONSULTATION

There has been no specific consultation on this report. The Terry Fox Drive Environmental Assessment Study included a substantial consultation component and any subsequent Official Plan Amendment process to pursue any of the approaches discussed in this report will also involve extensive consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no direct financial implications. Additional work related to environmental features and values in the area impacted by the Terry Fox extension will be addressed through the budget and recommendations related to the Terry Fox Drive Environmental Assessment Study. Any financial implications of a subsequent Official Plan Amendment will be addressed within the context of that amendment.

CONCLUSION

The selection of alignment 4-1 both provides some opportunities and raises some issues. While some environmental impacts on woodlands and wetlands associated with the South March Highlands are unavoidable regardless of the chosen alignment, alignment 4-1 does offer opportunities to reduce the impact and allow some significant woodland areas to remain intact. These benefits will, however, only be realised if strong protective measures are taken to ensure that development will not occur within these significant woodland areas. This becomes an issue in that alignment 4-1 also extends beyond the existing urban policy area, thereby increasing development pressure on the lands between alignment 4-1 and 4-2.

To address these issues, staff are proposing to proceed immediately with additional study to provide a more precise definition for the significant areas found between the two alignments. The land use questions related to any lands not contained within these significant areas will be addressed within the context of the Regional Official Plan amendment required to establish the alignment for the extension, once the environmental assessment process is complete.

*Approved by
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