

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. 25 09-96-0026
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 18 November 1996

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator, Transportation Committee

FROM/EXP. Director, Transportation Planning Division
 Environment and Transportation Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING - 16 OCT 96**
INQUIRY RE CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Transportation Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

On 15 October 1996, the National Capital Commission (NCC) Board of Directors approved the 15 October 1996 NCC staff report, attached as Annex "A", recommending a three-lane bridge. Effectively this decision means that work will now commence on the design and construction of the Champlain Bridge with a three-lane cross-section. This is a final decision. Construction is expected to commence in 1998.

In addition, the following motion was passed:

"Replacement of the existing deck and superstructure with a three-lane facility having a 17.75 m wide deck that can accommodate three traffic lanes with a lane reserved for high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) in the peak direction, two cycle lanes, two offsets, one sidewalk, and two railing curbs, but that operates as a two-lane bridge until such time as the RMOC and the CUO can agree, along with the NCC, on a final operating design as a 2 or 3 lane bridge. If no agreement can be reached over the coming year, the issue will be reviewed and addressed by the NCC."

This additional motion indicates that the NCC has not made a final decision as to whether the third lane will be used at this time.

This report addresses questions raised by Transportation Committee on 16 October 1996 resulting from the NCC decisions. Specifically, Councillor Linda Davis requested the following:

1. A staff response to the recent decision taken by the NCC with respect to the Champlain Bridge, including some solutions that could be sought between the Region and the CUO.
2. A staff response to the document prepared by the NCC as an argument against the Region's position.

DISCUSSION

I. Staff Response to the NCC Decision.

Staff believe that the NCC decision on the Champlain Bridge should be viewed in terms of two distinct parts. The first, dealing with the decision to reconstruct the bridge with three lanes and the second part dealing with how the bridge would operate.

The discussion below is structured along these two distinct parts.

A. The Decision to Construct Three Lanes

Staff reaction to this decision is straightforward and, in essence, echoes Regional Council's directions which have been communicated to the NCC on several occasions. Regional Council does not support the construction of the Champlain Bridge as a three-lane facility.

The basis of Regional Council's position in opposing the three-lane bridge has been summarized in the report entitled *Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton Response to the National Capital Commission's Intent of Decision on the Champlain Bridge, 20 September 1996*, which was approved by Regional Council on 25 September 1996 (summary attached as Annex "B"), complete copy has been previously distributed to all Councillors and is available from the Committee Coordinator.

Nothing in the package of material that the NCC sent to us in support of their decision of 15 October 1996 has changed Regional staff's position described above.

B. How the Bridge Should Operate: Two vs. Three Lanes?

Notwithstanding the NCC decision to build the bridge with three lanes and Regional opposition to that decision, Regional staff are of the opinion that the bridge should continue to operate as a two-lane bridge for the future. The arguments for operating it as such are extensively based on the same rationale as that of not building the bridge as three-lanes. Namely, planning, environmental, technical and financial reasons.

These arguments will be used during discussions in the coming year prescribed by the NCC for the RMOC and the CUO to agree on a final operating design for the bridge.

In Search of Solutions and Alternatives

Regional Council had agreed to many of the Environmental Assessment study findings of the McCormick Rankin & Assoc. Ltd. study. These included:

- a) The construction of a new access to Tunney's Pasture from the Ottawa River Parkway ensuring that this does not create cut through traffic to any surrounding streets (Holland, Ross Avenue).
- b) Modifications to the east-to-north ramp at Island Park Drive and the Ottawa River Parkway.
- c) Provision of bicycle lanes and a pedestrian walkway on the Bridge.
- d) The pursuit of transit and transportation demand management measures to facilitate interprovincial travel.

In addition, the RMOC through OC Transpo would be willing to work with the STO to facilitate access to the transitway (at Tunney's Pasture) from the Champlain Bridge.

The RMOC is prepared to co-operate with the CUO and the NCC in other ways as well. For example:

- The NCC has recently conducted a study with other agencies entitled "Transportation Demand Management for Interprovincial Travel in the National Capital Region". This study identifies an Aylmer Ridesharing Demonstration Programme. We wish to work with them on such projects.
- We have obtained from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation a ridesharing software program which we would be happy to make available for the demonstration project. This software facilitates matching travellers to common destinations like Tunney's Pasture.
- Another recommendation from this recent multi-agency Study report is to identify and implement the use of Park and Ride lots. This would enhance the public transit system and play a key role in managing the congestion on the bridge.

We believe the above list of solutions is not exhaustive but provides an indication of the type of solutions that could be discussed. However, we must find ways that would facilitate the dialogue and communication among the agencies affected to discuss these and other solutions.

The need for discussions is reinforced if one examines the recently received Transport Québec's "Plan de Transport 1996-2011" dated September 1996. A cursory review of pages 53 and 54 and Exhibits 7 and 8 of their report outline MTQ's position on several interprovincial travel issues:

- Corridor protection for VIABUS along CP corridor.
- HOV on Champlain Bridge with third lane option (prior to 2011).
- Kettle Island Bridge Crossing (after 2011).
- Corridor protection for a Britannia-Deschênes crossing.
- No requirement for study of the Masson-Angers and Orléans crossing given the projected population and employment locations outlined in their plan.

This report essentially confirms MTQ's previously stated position on each of the above noted transportation proposals.

On the other hand, the RMOC Transportation Master Plan, being prepared as part of the Official Plan Review, would differ greatly in the treatment of the above interprovincial travel issues. The MTQ plan and the RMOC plan will simply not be harmonious.

II. Staff Response to the NCC's Document Containing Arguments Against RMOC's Position

On 01 October 1996, the Region submitted a response on the NCC's Intent of Decision of 3 September 1996 to all members of the NCC's Board of Directors. This submission documented in some detail the Region's reasons why it disagreed with the Intent of Decision, and recommended that the NCC reconsider its position when making a final decision. The NCC prepared a response to the Region's submission and included it in the document *Champlain Bridge Reconstruction Initial Environmental Evaluation Recommendations - Section 13 Public Concern Analysis*, which was also provided to the NCC Board of Directors. This NCC response is attached as Annex "C".

The primary points made by the NCC, and the Regional staff response are as follows:

"The costing of Ottawa roadway upgrades was not considered necessary during the Environmental Study because the recommendation for no changes to the Island Park Drive intersection results in minor traffic increases and no roadway upgrade requirements."

Staff believe that the benefits associated with a third lane are so slight or insignificant without modifications to the Ottawa-side roads, that the ability to take advantage of such modifications likely factored into the decision.

"The traffic congestion may be somewhat relieved in the afternoon peak period with a 3-lane bridge."

Most of the focus in the study was related to the AM peak period; clearly the NCC and Region agree that there will be no improvements during the AM peak period. With respect to possible relief in the PM peak period, staff believe that much of this would be realised with the 2-lane option, due to the proposed modifications to the westbound-to-northbound ramp leading to the south side of the bridge. Any further relief associated with the third lane is questionable, as the Ottawa side intersections that feed the bridge during the PM peak are currently at capacity.

"All pertinent information has been considered to assess the environmental implications of the Proposal.."; "The environmental assessment of the Champlain Bridge has been exhaustively reviewed internally and externally by NCC staff, consultant and technical advisory committee members. It is unlikely that a public review of the assessment by a Panel would provide significant new information about the Proposal or alternatives to it that are not currently available to decision-makers"; and "The consultant was not given a decision-making mandate regarding the Proposal."

Staff agree that the environmental assessment contains an exhaustive consideration of the implications of the options, in reaching its recommendation **in support of the 2-lane option**. The documentation in support of the 3-lane option, in contrast, is much less comprehensive and does not include certain aspects that were included in the consultant's evaluation. For example, the \$6 million savings associated with a particular 2-lane option was not mentioned.

As the meetings of the NCC Board of Directors were not open, staff do not know whether these omitted aspects were discussed and considered by the Board in reaching its decision.

While the NCC argue that the decision-making process was objective and considered all aspects, the package of briefs and submissions to the NCC indicate that many people did not see the process as such. Furthermore, these briefs and the media were critical of the NCC closed door policy. Regional Council has requested an open forum.

"The general transportation policy concerns raised are beyond the authority of the National Capital Commission and the scope of a specific project."

Staff note that some of the policy concerns **are** the responsibility of the NCC, for example, the NCC policy of discouraging increased use of its parkways and driveways by commuters.

"The NCC considered that the potentially adverse impacts that may be caused by the Proposal are either insignificant or mitigable with known technology and that the benefits of the project are important, such as: a peak directional HOV lane that places priority on transit and high-occupancy vehicles; it also represents a continuity to the network of HOV lanes and park-and-ride facilities being developed by the STO; an improvement of the quality of service for evening peak direction traffic along the bridge."

Staff agree that the impacts will be insignificant without Ottawa-side modifications, however, by the same token, so will the benefits. The Region has consistently argued that the impacts and benefits are directly linked. Furthermore, the HOV lanes on part of the Champlain Bridge do not constitute "network continuity" for HOV as the consultant (McCormick Rankin & Assoc. Ltd.) noted in their Environmental Assessment report.

CONCLUSION

Transportation issues across the Ottawa River must be viewed with the full picture in mind. Not only in terms of not shifting a problem from one side to the other but also in looking at all practical solutions that would enhance the transportation system on both sides.

*Approved by
Louis Shallal, P. Eng., Ph. D.*

LS/RGM/md

Attach (3)

National Capital
CommissionCommission
de la Capitale nationale

Submission Sheet

Soumission

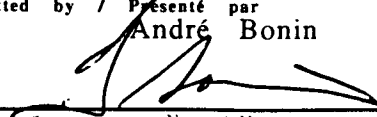
A - Title/Subject Champlain Bridge Reconstruction Initial Environmental Evaluation Recommendations - Section 13 - Public Concern Analysis	Titre/Sujet Recommandations de l'Évaluation environnementale initiale du projet de reconstruction du pont Champlain - Analyse des préoccupations de la population en vertu de l'article 13
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B - Reason for the Submission / Motif de la soumission To inform the Commission about the results of the evaluation of the public concern and to recommend a decision for the Champlain Reconstruction project.	Informer la Commission des résultats de l'évaluation des préoccupations manifestées par la population et recommander une décision concernant le projet de reconstruction du pont Champlain.
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C - Recommendations / Recommandations	
1.0 That pursuant to Section 13 of EARPGO a public review of the assessment by a Panel is not desirable; and	1.0 Conformément à l'article 13 du Décret sur les lignes directrices concernant le PEEE, un examen public de l'évaluation par une commission n'est pas souhaitable;
2.0 That the Champlain Bridge Reconstruction Proposal set out below proceed with the mitigation measures identified in the IEE (July 1996) and Addendum (September 1996):	2.0 Que la proposition de reconstruction du pont Champlain exposée ci-dessous soit mise en oeuvre avec les mesures d'atténuation définies dans l'EEI (juillet 1996) et l'Addendum (septembre 1996):
2.1 Replacement of the existing deck and superstructure with a three-lane facility having a 17.75 m wide deck that includes three traffic lanes with a lane reserved for high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) in the peak direction, two cycle lanes, two offsets, one sidewalk, two railing curbs;	2.1 Le remplacement du tablier et de la superstructure en place par un ouvrage à trois voies ayant un tablier de 17,75 mètres de largeur comprenant trois voies de circulation dont une voie est réservée aux véhicules à plusieurs passagers (VPP) dans la direction de pointe, deux voies cyclables, deux dégagements, un trottoir et deux bordures de garde-fou;
2.2 Modifications to Highway 148, to Place Samuel-de-Champlain and to the Lucerne-Brunet intersections, and no modifications to the Island Park Drive-Ottawa River Parkway intersection;	2.2 Des modifications à la route 148, à la Place Samuel-de-Champlain et au carrefour du boulevard Lucerne/Brunet, mais pas de modification au carrefour des promenades Island Park et Rivière-des-Outaouais;
2.3 Provision of a new access from the Ottawa River Parkway to Tunney's Pasture to enhance transit services and to reduce traffic along Island Park Drive and Parkdale Avenue;	2.3 L'aménagement d'un nouvel accès à Tunney's Pasture à partir de la promenade de la Rivière-des-Outaouais, pour améliorer le service de transport en commun et réduire la circulation sur la promenade Island Park et l'avenue Parkdale;
2.4 Extension of the northbound access lane from the Ottawa River Parkway to the Bridge to facilitate merging of traffic and to reduce traffic congestion in the evening peak direction;	2.4 Le prolongement de la voie d'accès au pont en direction nord à partir de la promenade de la Rivière-des-Outaouais, pour faciliter la convergence des véhicules et réduire la congestion dans le sens de la circulation de pointe du soir;
2.5 Considering the primary roles of the Champlain Bridge and Island Park Drive as vital links in the total parkway system, continued prohibition of commercial vehicles on Champlain Bridge and on Island Park Drive.	2.5 Le maintien de l'interdiction des véhicules commerciaux sur le pont Champlain et la promenade Island Park, compte tenu du rôle important du pont et de cette artère dans le réseau global des promenades.

D - Routing of the Submission / Cheminement de la soumission

	Date	Decision		Date	Advice	
		Décision	Information		Avis	Information
Executive Management Comité exécutif de gestion	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive Comité directeur	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commission	96-10-15	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audit + Evaluation Vérification + évaluation	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

E - Submitted by / Présenté par  André Bonin	Environmental and Land Management / Gestion des terrains et de l'environnement	96-10-15
Name / Nom	Branch / Direction	Date

SUMMARY OF BASIS FOR RMOC POSITION

The basis for the RMOC position is four-fold:

1. **Planning and Environmental**
The decision has the following planning deficiencies:
 - a. *The NCC parkway policy of discouraging increased use by commuters has not been maintained.*
 - b. *The larger road network was not considered*
 - c. *HOV lanes on the bridge alone will produce negligible gains.*
 - d. *A third lane will focus attention on widening Ottawa roads, which would have significant social environmental impacts.*

2. **Technical**
The decision in favour of a third lane is not the most appropriate option from a technical point, as it:
 - a. *Does not solve the congestion problem*
 - b. *Has less flexibility to adapt to change*
 - c. *Requires resources to operate the reversible HOV lanes, but provides no significant resulting benefits.*
 - d. *Does not recognize that HOV lanes could create traffic conflicts, with the potential of increased accident rates.*

3. **Financial**
The third lane option is \$6 million more expensive than a two-lane option rejected at an earlier stage. The cost of Ottawa road capacity improvements necessary to realize any transportation benefits has not been factored into the intent of decision.

4. **EA Process**
The decision to overturn the consultant's EA recommendation does not conform to the environmental assessment process

(2.2) CONCERNS OF STAKEHOLDERS WITH THE CONTENT AND PROCESS OF THE PROPOSAL AND ASSOCIATED STUDIES AND REPORTS, AND THE CONSULTANT'S AND NCC'S RESPONSES

Association of Citizens for Transportation and the Environment (ACTE)

- ACTE endorses NCC intention of decision to add third lane to Champlain Bridge, because a third lane will not result in significant impacts on the natural environment and that community impacts will be restricted by maintaining the existing capacity of the IPD-ORP intersection;
- Suggests more than 75% of NCR residents surveyed in June and August 1996 favour third lane on Champlain Bridge and disagree with RMOC position that traffic congestion on the Bridge is an Outaouais problem;
- Acknowledges that addition of cycling lanes will mean fewer cars and less pollution while concerned that offsets between cycling and vehicle lanes have been eliminated in the option retained by NCC in September 1996;
- Acknowledge that HOV lane is consistent with STO and OC Transpo objectives of enhancing transit and will allow direct STO access to the RMOC Transitway at Tunney's Pasture and accordingly reduce travel time;
- Acknowledge that Champlain Bridge as part of the NCC parkway system will provide important access to the new Museum of Nature facility in Aylmer.
- Suggests that Ontario municipalities are obligated to facilitate commuter access to Ottawa considering the millions in annual grants in lieu of taxes from the federal government, and suggest sentiments against Quebecers in this case.

(Staff Response) The Environmental Study report (June 1996) has taken into consideration transportation policies, plans and studies of the Communauté urbaine de l'Outaouais and Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

The Commission has participated in a number of interprovincial and regional transportation studies, including the Outaouais Urban Community Integrated Transportation Plan and the Ottawa-Carleton Transportation Master Plan.

Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton

- Continue to be opposed to widening of the Champlain Bridge.
- Suggests that Environmental Study Report should clarify the Bridge design load.

Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (Cont'd)

- Acknowledges disagreement with technical information associated with the study and contend that NCC parkway policy of discouraging increased commuter use not maintained, broader roadway network not considered, HOV on Bridge will provide negligible benefits, third lane will force upgrade of Ottawa roadways, third lane does not solve traffic congestion problems, is less flexible to accommodate future changes, HOV would increase potential for accidents, 3-lane option is \$6 m more than Option 1.2.3 and does not include associated roadway upgrades, and NCC decision against the consultant recommendations is contrary to EA process.
- Requests that NCC consider applicability of Section 13 of EARPGO requiring all projects with significant public concern to be referred to the Minister of Environment for Panel Review.

(Consultant Response) *The Environmental Study included an analysis of the traffic distribution for all of the alternatives. The results of the analysis are shown in Exhibit 21, page 55 of the ESR. The costing of Ottawa roadway upgrades was not considered necessary during the Environmental Study because the recommendation for no changes to the IPD intersection results in minor traffic increases and no roadway upgrade requirements. The traffic congestion may be somewhat relieved in the afternoon peak period with a 3-lane Bridge.*

(Staff Response) *All pertinent information has been considered to assess the environmental implications of the Proposal and that the concerns raised related to the project can be addressed through design and proposed mitigation which would be implemented should the Proposal proceed.*

The general transportation policy concerns raised are beyond the authority of the National Capital Commission and the scope of a specific project.

The environmental assessment of the Champlain Bridge has been exhaustively reviewed internally and externally by NCC staff, consultant and technical advisory committee members. It is unlikely that a public review of the assessment by a Panel would provide significant new information about the Proposal or alternatives to it that are not currently available to decision-makers.

The National Capital Commission has, since the early 1970s, accepted by special agreement at the request of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, to allow OC Transpo services along some parkways in the spirit of encouraging public transit use.

The consultant was not given a decision-making mandate regarding the Proposal. The NCC considered that the potentially adverse impacts that may be caused by the Proposal are either insignificant or mitigable with known technology and that the benefits of the project are important, such as: a peak directional HOV lane that places priority on transit and high-occupancy vehicles; it also represents a continuity to the network of HOV lanes and park-and-ride facilities being developed by the STO; an improvement of the quality of service for evening peak direction traffic along the bridge.

City of Ottawa Council

- Rejects reconstruction or function of Bridge as 3-lane and endorses 2-lane option facility because of concern about increased traffic on IPD and other area roadways;
- Recommend that NCC refer project to the Minister of Environment for Panel Review in accordance with EARPGO.
- Endorses provision of pedestrian sidewalk on east side with strong preference for sidewalks on both sides, provision of two 1.5 m cycling lanes, prohibition of commercial vehicles on IPD and Champlain Bridge, extension of northbound merge lane from Ottawa River Parkway (ORP) to the Bridge, link between ORP and Tunney's Pasture provided there is no resulting through traffic and appropriate screening is conducted, shared use of transit facilities by Société de transport de l'Outaouais and OC Transpo, and application of TDM measures for interprovincial travel.
- Endorses joint reconsideration of interprovincial travel with emphasis on public transit measures like commuter rail, and consideration of a new interprovincial bridge for truck traffic outside urban area, like Cumberland-Masson.
- Requests that Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Public Advisory Committee (PAC) be reconvened to review supplementary information provided by the consultants, and that the NCC fund implementation of traffic calming measures for Island Park Drive (IPD) proposed by the joint traffic-calming study for IPD-Kirkwood-and Churchill areas.

(Consultant Response) Traffic projections are shown on Exhibit 21, page 55 of the ESR. It was predicted that with no change at the IPD intersection, the increases are equal and minor on the Ottawa streets for the 2-lane Bridge and the 3-lane Bridge options.