

## 5.0 Key Benefits of the WRI Expansion

This section summarizes the positive benefits that the Waterdown Road Interchange expansion would provide.

### 5.1 Policy Benefits

- √ **Fulfils Key Provincial Policy Objectives:** The government of Ontario has confirmed its commitment to protecting the land resources of this province, while at the same time creating the necessary conditions for economic growth, trade and investment. The WRI expansion provides a solid basis on realizing many of its key policy commitments. The interchange project has the capacity to: revitalize Aldershot's brownfield industrial lands, strengthen its tourism attraction capabilities -particularly the provincially-owned Royal Botanical Gardens, and improve Aldershot's status within the GTA-Niagara frontier trade corridor.
- √ **Fulfils Key City of Burlington Objectives:** The City of Burlington has been fully committed to bringing additional employment activity to the Waterdown /403 area for many years now. The City has worked diligently over the past several years to ensure that the land-use designations in the area are preserved and protected for their intended use. Through these efforts, Aldershot continues to maintain an extensive inventory of employment land. In total the area contains approximately 300 acres (121 ha.) of land, which, based on a conservative 40% coverage factor, would

yield 5.2 million square feet (486,000 square metres) of new industrial and office space.

The City clearly understands the strategic importance of Aldershot from a Smart Growth perspective. Given the locational amenities already in place, particularly mass-transit, Aldershot has the potential to become one of the province's best examples of Smart Growth.

### 5.2 Transportation Benefits

- √ **Improves Wayfinding:** Accessing and exiting Aldershot presents unique challenges to motorists and truck traffic, typically requiring circuitous routes. Providing a single point of entry and departure would vastly improve traffic movement in and around Aldershot. In addition, the WRI would provide an opportunity to enhance tourism oriented directional signage for visitors (i.e. the TODS sign program) accessing the Royal Botanical Gardens by creating an opportunity for a new sign along the QEW instructing motorists to follow Highway 403.
- √ **Reduces Truck Traffic:** Each day approximately 1275 trips are generated by businesses in the Waterdown/Plain Road industrial area which are either destined to, or arriving from, the east. Of these trips, 60% utilize Plains Road as a means to access the QEW. The provision of new ramps would virtually eliminate these vehicles from Aldershot's main commercial arterial.

- √ **Complements Future Highway Changes:** MTO has announced plans to modify the existing Highway 403 and Highway 6 interchange. These changes will have a direct impact on the local road network in Aldershot, making access to Plains Road (and the Royal Botanical Gardens) even more circuitous than it is today. Providing access from the east via Waterdown Road is an obvious solution to this problem, which will provide the added benefit of routing tourists onto Plains Road, creating better customer opportunities for retail businesses.
- √ **Improves Interchange Spacing:** Interchange spacing between Burlington and Hamilton (QEW/403) is generally consistent with the 2 to 3 kilometre geometric guidelines adopted by MTO and the Transport Association of Canada. Highway 403 through Aldershot falls well outside these guidelines (7.3 km. in the westbound lanes and 4.5 km. in the eastbound lanes).

*"Interchanges spaced at more than 3 kilometres over a length of urban freeway normally cannot provide adequate service to urban development, and closer interchange spacing is called for."*

Transportation Association of Canada  
Geometric Design Guidelines for Canadian Roads

### 5.3 Safety Benefits

- √ **Reduces Accident Response Time for Emergency Services:** Both the Burlington Fire Department and the Halton Regional Ambulance Service confirm that the existing interchange deficiencies present a formidable challenge to providing emergency service to accidents along Highway 403, particularly in the eastbound lanes between Waterdown and the Freeman Interchange.  
  
The delays in response time to these incidents may lengthen the recovery period of injured and potentially contributed to loss of life. In either case the economic consequences of these delays are borne by society and the families of the injured.
- √ **Ensures Emergency Readiness:** The existing highway and ramp configuration typically requires that emergency vehicles from Halton Region are forced to make circuitous trips or carry injured persons to hospitals in Hamilton, thus taking them outside of their normal service areas.
- √ **Enhances Safety on Plain Road:** The removal of truck traffic has been an on-going safety concern for residents of Aldershot, concerned about children crossing Plains Road.

#### 5.4 Development Benefits (Spin-off Construction)

- √ **Re-activates the sluggish real estate market:** Despite a recent period of strong economic growth and real estate investment throughout the GTA, Aldershot failed to attract its fair share of development over the past decade. Several development projects in Aldershot have come “close”, but ultimately failed to materialize because of access related issues. Based on discussions with local ICI professionals, several companies have expressed their desire to build warehouse and distribution facilities (taking advantage of low real estate values), however, the lack of a financial commitment to expand the interchange has driven many prospective companies to other (often more expensive) locations.
- √ **Strengthens Burlington’s competitive position:** The City of Burlington has developed an economic development strategy that concentrates on four growth sectors: financial services, software, metal fabrication and advanced manufacturing. The Aldershot area is well positioned to attract these and other companies by virtue of the physical assets and amenities it offers. Much of the employment lands are capable of accommodating prestige tenants seeking campus-type business parks.
- √ **Opens Aldershot up to 9,000 new jobs:** The Aldershot Study Area has the capacity to accommodate approximately 9,000 new jobs in which

would generate over \$297 million in labour income, plus an additional \$382 million in value added income.

- √ **Stimulates new opportunities for Development Charges and Building Permit Revenues:** The WRI expansion has the potential to trigger the development of 5.6 million square feet (520,000 sq.m.) of new industrial ,commercial retail development along Highway 403. Based on current City of Burlington and Halton Region development fees, an estimated \$31.3 million in fees could be generated at the local and regional level. Moreover, an additional \$24.6 million could be generated through new residential construction in the vicinity of the interchange.
- √ **Strengthens Burlington’s Tax Base:** The full build out of the Aldershot Area would result in approximately \$20 million of additional property tax on an annual basis.

#### 5.5 Tourism Benefits

- √ **Strengthens the Plains Road Village Vision:** The WRI is an integral part of the Plains Road Village Vision, which seeks to revitalize and reposition the street as a community asset that supports tourism and connects two of Aldershot’s largest visitor attractions IKEA (to the east), and Royal Botanical Gardens (to the west). The opportunity to establish an attractive “garden-like” street is greatly compromised by the presence of large truck volumes on Plains Road. The

interchange is the only way to re-route traffic off of Plains Road.

## 5.6 Business & Trade Benefits

- √ **Improves Access to Toronto and US Markets:** The existing ramp configuration at Waterdown Road does not reflect the prevailing business and trade conditions faced by Aldershot companies. The City of Hamilton, although still an important market for attracting labour, is no longer a high growth market for Aldershot area companies and their products. Based on our discussions with local business in the vicinity, between 70% and 90% of all in-bound or out-bound shipments involve customers or suppliers east of Waterdown Road.

## 5.7 Travel Savings Benefits

- √ **Improves Productivity and Reduces Travel Costs:** Truck and commuter traffic to and from the area is required to use arterial/collector roadways for significant distances to reach interchanges at Highway 403 and the QEW.

In the process of this travel users are forced to spend, on average, an additional 20 minutes in travel time at the average cost of \$5.53 per traveller per trip 4.<sup>8</sup>

It is estimated that between 8,000 and 9,000 vehicles trips would use the new interchange ramps on a daily basis. Assuming average auto occupancy of 1.7 persons, the avoided cost that can be sustained by the construction of the Interchange amounts to \$24.7 million annually.

## 5.8 Retail Benefits

- √ **Strengthens the Viability of Retail and Service Commercial Uses:** The interchange will help to attract new retail investment, enabling greater access to the community from non-residents. The interchange provides the basis to establish new retail services in an area that has the capacity to draw from a local customer base that includes both local resident and nearby workers.

An Ontario Municipal Board Decision in 1999 provided a basis for new retail facilities on lands located immediately south of the CN railway tracks at Waterdown and Masonry Court, known locally as the TCG Lands (now owned by Paletta International). The Board has recognized the opportunity for selected retail uses on a portion of these lands including, retail warehouse, retail, restaurants and other service commercial activities. The WRI expansion would help to advance the market position of these lands in a manner that is consistent with the permitted uses determined by the OMB.

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<sup>8</sup> Conservative estimate based on Hamilton/Burlington average annual earnings for 1998 (the most recent year for which income data is available) of \$33,130.

## 5.9 Ramp Construction and Maintenance Impacts

- √ **A \$4.75 million dollar capital expenditure provides strong economic benefits for both the province and the City of Burlington, resulting in a total gross value added output of \$11.4 million.** The City of Burlington will absorb a significant amount of total value added and total gross output (approximately 60%), while the Province will be a major tax revenue beneficiary, absorbing 40% of all taxes generated for the three levels of government.