

Hello Jess,

Thank you for your input to the Highway 401 Gananoque to Mallorytown Planning and Preliminary Design Study.

We understand your position and concern regarding the ecological importance of the corridor and wildlife pathways within. Our Project Team understands that this stretch of the Highway 401 is vital to the ecological connectivity of the area, and we are considering the recommendations provided in conjunction with the input provided from our natural heritage and drainage specialists, as part of the assessment of design requirements for both the existing and future culverts.

The Ministry is undertaking this Planning, Preliminary Design and Environmental Assessment (EA) Study to plan for the long-term rehabilitation and replacement needs of bridges and culverts along Highway 401 that are nearing the end of their life expectancy. As part of this work, the Ministry is also identifying the future highway footprint for six and ultimately eight lanes to ensure that new bridges, culverts and interchanges are designed to accommodate future needs. At this time, there are no timelines to widen Highway 401. Any future expansion would only proceed when warranted by growth and traffic demand, and would depend on provincial priorities, funding availability, and required environmental approvals.

As part of the current Preliminary Design/Class EA phase we are completing a review of natural heritage features including vegetation community classification and mapping, species records, and wildlife presence. The Project Team is also conducting field investigations to identify the species within the Study Area, assess habitat potential and conduct incidental wildlife observations and existing site conditions.

To facilitate wildlife movement under the highway in this area, this study will explore opportunities to enhance/ expand existing openings by upsizing culverts or replacing them with bridges, where appropriate. A separate feasibility study will be carried out by MTO to look at the possibility for new wildlife crossings in suitable locations between Gananoque and Brockville. Once completed, the results of the feasibility study will inform current and future Highway 401 planning project.

As part of the environmental assessment process, the Ministry uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the different alternatives being considered for the project. Qualitative evaluation looks at the potential effects of each alternative in a descriptive way. This means the Project Team reviews how each design alternative may impact things like the natural environment (for example, wetlands), nearby communities, cultural heritage features, technical feasibility and existing land uses. The team identifies advantages, disadvantages, and potential mitigation and/or compensation measures for each option based on professional judgment, technical input, and feedback from the public and other agencies.

Quantitative evaluation looks at the same factors but in a numerical and measurable way. Each category, such as environment, socio-economic, cultural and transportation feasibility is assigned a weighting to reflect its relative importance in the decision-making process. The Project Team utilizes different weighting scenarios to see how sensitive the results are to changes in priorities. This helps confirm that the preferred alternative performs well under a range of priorities and remains balanced



and defensible. For this project, we will test scenarios where the natural environment category is given a higher weighting than the base scenario. By combining both qualitative and quantitative evaluations, the Ministry can make a well-informed decision.

As part of the current Preliminary Design/Class EA phase, the Project Team will continue to assess the ecological impacts of the proposed alternatives, including the effects of increased traffic on wildlife road mortality and habitat fragmentation. Feedback received from stakeholders, including the A2A Collaborative, will inform the evaluation of alternatives and the development of the Technically Preferred Plan. This plan will be presented at Public Information Centre (PIC) #2, tentatively scheduled for Fall 2026, and will include a 30-day public comment period.

We can confirm you are on the project's contact list and will be notified directly of any future updates related to the project. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the A2A Collaborative and other stakeholders to ensure that the ecological significance of this region is preserved for future generations. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss your recommendations in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact us or visit the project website at hwy401gananoquetomallorytown.ca.

Thank you once again for your valuable input and ongoing partnership.

Best regards,
The Highway 401 Gananoque to Mallorytown Project Team