Grey County Logo Committee Report

# Report TR-CW-11-17

**To**: Warden Barfoot and Members of Grey County Council

**From**: Pat Hoy, Director of Transportation Services

**Meeting Date:** March 23, 2017

**Subject: Highway 26 Alternate Route Signage – Collingwood to Thornbury**

**Status**: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW58-17;

## Recommendation

1. **That Report TR-CW-11-17 be received and that Grey County not proceed with placing signage identifying an alternate route for Highway 26 on Grey Road 19 and Grey Road 2.**

## Background

In May 2016, Town of The Blue Mountains (ToBM) staff met with staff from Town of Collingwood, Simcoe County and Grey County to discuss the potential for an alternate route for Highway 26. At the meeting, ToBM staff indicated that the purpose of the alternative route was to alleviate congestion along Hwy 26 in the Craigleith Area. Collingwood staff indicated that routing the public around Collingwood may have a negative effect on local businesses and the Town would likely not support the idea.

Subsequently, Grey County forwarded a letter to the Director of Infrastructure and Public Works at the ToBM that identified the following 5 concerns:

1. The purpose of a Provincial Highway is access for the travelling public and to transport goods and services. The volumes of these roads (Highway 26) justify a higher level of service. Directing traffic onto a Grey Road with a lower level of service may represent a risk to the travelling public (i.e. winter season).
2. The proposal in general has no significant reduction in travel time although clearly the residents on Highway 26, east of Thornbury may benefit from reduced traffic.
3. The Grey County intersections on the alternate route are not controlled by signals. It is generally unadvisable to direct traffic from signalized intersections to non-signalized intersections.
4. The increased traffic on Grey Roads (specifically trucks) will have a financial impact on the Grey Roads by decreasing the useful life.
5. The roads on the alternate route typically experience a significant amount of cyclists. Since the entire route does not currently have paved shoulders, the increased traffic would have an impact on the cyclists.

In addition to the 5 points mentioned above, Grey County Transportation Services has also considered:

* No traffic study has been completed by the ToBM at this time and it is unclear how the traffic patterns may change if the signage were installed
* If the route were to gain in popularity, it would likely increase the required level of service and/or warrants for future intersection upgrades on Grey County Roads.
* There was no indication how any increased maintenance or construction would be funded
* The new signage may increase the traffic on Grey Road 2, Grey Road 19, Poplar Sideroad, Concession 10 and Sixth Street, effectively just ‘moving the problem’
* There are a significant amount of agricultural vehicles along Grey Road 2 and more traffic may cause increased driver frustration
* The large number of Highway 26 East and Highway 26 West signs would be confusing to motorists if the motorist was intending to access Highway 26 between Thornbury and the Highway 26 East study area limit.

Grey County would like to see a reduction of the trip times from Thornbury to Stayner, to benefit the travelling public. Unfortunately, there appears to be no justification that this would occur.

The Ministry of Transportation Highway 26 Transportation Study Needs Assessment Report completed in May 2015 by AECOM identified this option as the least preferred.

ToBM subsequently sent a letter dated February 21, 2017 to Grey County. The letter indicated that “…a dramatic widening of the highway corridor between Collingwood and Thornbury will essentially destroy the enjoyable experience of travelling along the southern shore of Georgian Bay which both residents of and visitors to Grey County enjoy”. ToBM has requested that Grey County pass the following resolution;

*WHEREAS the Town of The Blue Mountains is desirous of promoting a Highway 26 Alternate Route between Collingwood and Thornbury and seeking the endorsement of Grey County for the concept;*

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT the County of Grey does agree to cooperate with the Town of The Blue Mountains to mature the alternate route signage plan between the various road authorities involved and coordinate with the Ministry of Transportation regarding signage of the provincial highway.*

Collingwood received a similar letter and Collingwood Council passed the following resolution at the Council meeting March 13, 2017;

*WHEREAS the Town of Collingwood completely understands and respects the Town of The Blue Mountains concerns with traffic along the Highway 26 corridor;*

*And whereas the Town of Collingwood has its own concerns with respect to Provincial significant traffic through and around our community however we must find a balance with respect to this traffic as a large number of the businesses in our community rely on this traffic;*

*And whereas diverting Highway 26 traffic around the Town of Collingwood will have a negative impact on the Collingwood businesses that rely on this traffic to support their business;*

*And whereas the signage at both ends of the alternative route do not provide the driver with a clear understanding of the alternatives as it may relate to Collingwood and the services that may be available to the driver;*

*And whereas the Town of Collingwood cannot endorse the proposed Highway 26 Alternate Route Signage as the Town feels it would negatively impact on our community;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct Staff to work collaboratively with the Town of Blue Mountains to find an alternative that would collectively resolve the Town’s concerns.*

Transportation Services staff has completed a review of the recommendation from ToBM and are hesitant to direct Provincial Highway traffic onto Grey Road 2 and Grey Road 19. The request as forwarded does not thoroughly identify the full impact of the plan on Grey County roads. Transportation Services are therefore recommending against passing the resolution as requested by ToBM.

## Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

Grey County could incur significant costs from the increased wear and tear that the additional traffic would cause on Grey Road 19 and Grey Road 2. The party responsible for the cost of installing and maintaining the signage has not been identified.

## Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

The Values Statement of the approved Corporate Strategic Plan includes Fiscal Responsibility. The significant operational costs that could be incurred by Grey County make supporting the resolution difficult.

## Attachments

[Ministry of Transportation Highway 26 Transportation Study Needs Assessment Report](http://highway26transportationstudy.ca/downloads/July2015/Highway%2026%20Transportation%20Needs%20Assessment_FINAL_May-2015_Volume%20I-Main%20Report.pdf)

Letter from Town of The Blue Mountains Regarding Endorsement for Highway 26 Alternate Route Signage – Collingwood to Thornbury

Town of The Blue Mountains Staff Report B.6.2 CSPW.17.012 - Hwy 26 Alternate Route Endorsement (All referenced attachments are included in report TR-CW-11-17)

Letter from Minister Steven Del Duca, Ministry of Transportation Regarding Connecting Link Highway 26 Alternative Route Signage

Highway 26 Alternate Route Trailblazing Signage

Respectfully submitted by,

Patrick Hoy  
Director of Transportation Services

















