August 9, 2018

Warden Halliday and Members of
Grey Council
595 9th Ave. E, County Building
Owen Sound, ON N4K 3E3

Dear Warden Halliday and Members of Grey Council:

At its meeting on June 27, 2018, County Council adopted Report CAO 2018-18 entitled “SouthwestLynx: Integrated High Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario (attached). The SouthwestLynx plan is the fourth of a Southwestern Ontario transportation series the County of Oxford commissioned Greg Gormick, On Track Strategies to prepare. By demonstrating the potential passenger rail capacity within the existing rail corridors through Southwestern Ontario, SouthwestLynx presents the unquestionable viability of high performance rail (HPR) complemented by a fully integrated intercommunity transportation system as a logical, practical, affordable and deliverable public transportation solution for Southwestern Ontario.

In addition, I have attached an electronic copy of our brochure, Connecting Southwestern Ontario. This brochure summarizes the SouthwestLynx plan and the prior reports Oxford County commissioned; “New Directions”, “Empowering Ontario’s Short Line Railways” and “Steel Corridors of Opportunity”.

All four of the reports are available through our home page at www.oxfordcounty.ca. As well, your Chief Administrative Officer has a hardcopy of the full SouthwestLynx document.

With the adoption of Report CAO 2018-18, Oxford County Council seeks Grey County Council support in advancing the SouthwestLynx plan through the adoption of the following proposed resolution:

That Grey County Council supports Oxford County’s SouthwestLynx proposal for the development of an Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation Solution for Southwestern Ontario.
Our intent is to also seek the support of the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus at their August 2018 meeting.

Our thanks in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter M. Crockett, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

Encl.

Cc: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer, Grey
To: Warden and Members of County Council
From: Chief Administrative Officer

SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario

RECOMMENDATIONS


2. And further, that staff submit Report CAO 2018-18 and its attachments to the High Speed Rail Program Office in support of Oxford’s prior position that Southwestern Ontario requires a fully integrated public transportation solution and that the HSR EA Terms of Reference must include the full and comparative assessment of alternatives to the proposed HSR corridor including the optimization of existing rail corridors;

3. And further, that funding in the amount of $175,000, to be financed from General Reserves be approved for the establishment of a High Speed Rail EA Peer Review Team in coordination with the Corridor Impacted Municipalities group and to develop and undertake a Southwestern Ontario Transportation Dialogue and Relationship program as described in Report CAO 2018-18;

4. And further, that Report CAO 2018-18 and its attachments be forwarded to Oxford’s Area Municipalities, the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR), the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC), the Mayors of Southwestern Ontario (MOSO), the Member of Parliament (Oxford), Member of Provincial Parliament (Oxford), the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and interested community stakeholders for their information and support.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council support for, and authorization to advance, the SouthwestLynx proposal for an integrated high performance public transportation system for Southwestern Ontario.

- Further, this report seeks Council authority to submit the SouthwestLynx proposal to the Provincial High Speed Rail office in support Oxford County’s position that Southwestern Ontario requires a fully integrated public transportation solution and that there is a viable alternative that must be given full and comparative consideration in the Province of Ontario’s
Implementation Points

Upon adoption of this report staff will initiate all actions related thereto and in doing so begin a comprehensive program to address Oxford’s concerns with the High Speed Rail proposal and to stimulate advancement of the dialogue and cooperation necessary amongst key stakeholders and partners critical to advancing a transportation solution for Southwestern Ontario.

Financial Impact

The adoption of Report CAO 2018-18 approves $175,000, to be financed by the General Reserve, for initiatives outlined in this report and not included within the approved 2018 Budget and Business Plan. The Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Risks/Implications

There are no risks inherent with the adoption of this report.

Strategic Plan (2015-2018)

County Council adopted the County of Oxford Strategic Plan (2015-2018) at its regular meeting held May 27, 2015. The initiative contained within this report supports the Values and Strategic Directions as set out in the Strategic Plan as it pertains to the following Strategic Directions:

2. ii. A County that is Well Connected – Advocate for appropriate federal and provincial support, programming and financial initiatives to strengthen the movement of people and goods to, from and through the County

3. i. A County that Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future – Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County by:

- Advocating for federal and provincial initiatives that are appropriate to our county

DISCUSSION

Background

In 2015, County Council demonstrated significant municipal leadership through the adoption of the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan and committed to achieving 100% Renewable Energy by 2050, Zero Waste and Zero Poverty. With these commitments Council has also recognized the need to influence public policy well beyond our borders including advocacy for Southwestern Ontario.
This is the fourth in a series of transportation reports Oxford County commissioned Greg Gormick, On Track Strategies, to prepare. This series of reports outline the key issues facing transportation and freight mobility and efficiency across Southwestern Ontario.

Previous support for the development of an Integrated Public Transportation Master Plan, as outlined in the New Directions package (2016) and for freight policy reform as outlined in the Empowering Ontario’s Short Line Railways (2017) report is a demonstration of Council understanding that a vibrant economy requires the efficient movement of both people and goods. Most recently, at its June 13, 2018 meeting Council endorsed Steel Corridors of Opportunity which outlines the role and freight rail in Southwestern Ontario and suggested actions related thereto.

Finally, as Council is aware, the Province of Ontario is proposing a High Speed Rail project ultimately connecting Toronto to Windsor. The proposal includes a new rail corridor west of Kitchener to London. For this section of new rail corridor, the Province of Ontario has issued a commencement notice for the development of an Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference for a proposed High Speed Rail project. To this point it appears the intent is to exclude from consideration any options to optimize the existing rail corridors. At its March 14, 2018 meeting Council adopted the following resolution upon receipt of the Notice of Commencement:

“That the Ministry of Transportation correspondence dated February 27, 2018 regarding the High Speed Rail (HSR) Environmental Assessment (EA) Terms of Reference – Notice of Commencement be received;

And further, that the County of Oxford respectfully and unequivocally expects, as is required under the Environmental Assessment Act, the proposed HSR EA Terms of Reference to explicitly include a full and comparative assessment of the High Performance Rail alternative as outlined in Warden Mayberry’s January 18, 2018 letter to Premier Wynne, Minister Del Duca (then Minister of Transportation) and Minister Ballard (Minister of the Environment and Climate Change);

And further, that the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Leader of the PC Party of Ontario, the Leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, the Leader of the Green Party of Ontario, Ernie Hardeman (MPP Oxford), and the Executive Director of High Speed Rail be so advised.”

The Warden and staff continue to pursue Council’s requirement for a Southwestern Ontario fully integrated public transportation solution and a full and comparative assessment of alternatives to High Speed Rail, to no specific avail at this point.

Comments

Context

It is Oxford’s position that the Province of Ontario has prematurely concluded that High Speed Rail (HSR) is the only possible solution for enhancing public transportation connections between Toronto and Southwestern Ontario. Public transportation ridership, impact and value is not dictated by speed alone. Rather more critical is service frequency, reliability, convenience, quality, cost and extensive service integration amongst other public transportation modes.
Since 2016, Oxford County has advocated for an Integrated Public Transportation Master Plan that would consider a range of public transportation options to connect the larger urban centres of Southwestern Ontario with key points east to Toronto, while at the same time connect the small urban/rural communities of Southwestern Ontario to each other and key urban centres.

With this in mind, and prior to the aforementioned issuance of the Notice of Commencement, staff had commissioned the development of a feasibility assessment to understand the potential for improving the existing rail corridors through Southwestern Ontario.

The result is a proposed public transportation strategy for Southwestern Ontario that illustrates a viable option to provide a high quality transportation connection to Toronto that focuses on the optimization of the existing rail corridors, referenced as High Performance Rail (HPR). This report demonstrates that a HPR solution, when coupled with critical intercommunity transportation services and properly leveraging other intended rail investments, can achieve dramatic transportation connectivity enhancements across Southwestern Ontario in comparable travel times, markedly earlier and at substantially lower costs than High Speed Rail.

**SouthwestLynx – Practical and Implementable**

We have called the proposal SouthwestLynx. Our premise is a Southwestern Ontario centric transportation solution that connects to Toronto, rather than forcing a Toronto centric solution to fit the transportation needs specific to Southwestern Ontario as currently envisioned by the Province’s HSR proposal. The difference between the two approaches is transformational.

SouthwestLynx is a practical, affordable plan that can be rapidly deployed to address the public transportation access and mobility deficiencies that are threatening Southwestern Ontario’s economic, community and environmental destiny.

SouthwestLynx is based on several successful High Performance Rail (HPR) based services now being offered or emerging in the U.S., which are in turn based on similar examples from around the world. Many of the international HPR based systems laid the groundwork for the subsequent addition of HSR services to further augment the base HPR services. All of these successful global precedents have included major intercommunity transportation components, which have not only acted as feeders to the HPR core routes, but also to provide stand-alone service between the points they serve.

While the proponents are making much of the proposed HSR’s Toronto-Kitchener-London unverified 73 minute travel time, optimizing the existing Toronto-Woodstock-London south rail corridor can result in a very competitive 100 minutes travel time. The longer Toronto-Kitchener-London north rail corridor can be optimized to achieve as low as 140 minute travel times. All at a fraction of the cost and impacts associated with any HSR proposal, currently estimated to cost at least $21 billion.

Moreover while an optimistic first HSR train date is likely well beyond 2025, the HPR based SouthwestLynx proposal to optimize the existing corridors can create passenger rail capacity within the first year. It is expected that within a single year, the existing corridors could accommodate 5 additional two-way daily Toronto – London trains (from 7 to 12). Further strategic optimization investment in existing rail corridors can create the track capacity for as
many as 30 two-way daily Toronto – London passenger rail trips (from 7 to 30) within the first 5 years. Within the SouthwestLynx plan, daily two-way passenger trains Toronto-Windsor and Toronto-Sarnia can double from 4 to 8 and 2 to 4 respectively in the same time period. Quicker, better, faster is SouthwestLynx!

Simply put, SouthwestLynx can begin improving the region’s public transportation system within one year because its focus is within the two existing rail corridors. It is scalable and incremental, and it can be completed at a substantially lower and more readily verifiable cost than the initial $21 billion, 14 years required for the proposed Toronto-London-Windsor HSR project. The HSR proposal costs and implementation time are best case initial estimates only.

SouthwestLynx proposes a HPR core system to significantly improve the current Southwestern Ontario rail passenger services, augmented by an extensive and coordinated network of connecting intercommunity transportation services all of which would be linked to intermodal mobility hubs (Attachment 1). SouthwestLynx requires only minor land acquisition, severs no agricultural properties, includes rail freight benefits and provides a broader range of transportation improvements offering better value, compared with HSR.

In order of priority, the initial 5 year projects within the two existing rail corridors include:

1. Aldershot-Bayview Junction Capacity Expansion

The key obstacle to any thought of passenger rail service improvements using the CN South Main Line (Toronto-Brantford-Woodstock-London) is the capacity constraints on the CN portion of the Oakville Subdivision between Aldershot Station and Bayview Junction in Hamilton’s west end. This 2-km section of track is one of the most heavily used in Canada that often suffers severe conflicts between the passenger and freight trains.

Proposed track improvements are a vital first step to improving passenger and freight rail capacity through west Hamilton to Southwestern Ontario. The improvements are also key to VIA Rail services, absolutely essential to any thought of GO Transit Rail services to Brantford, Hamilton (all day) and beyond to Niagara.

The proposed track improvement in this area will cost a minimum of $500 million.

2. CN Guelph Subdivision Upgrading

The CN-owned portion of the Guelph Subdivision extends 91 km from the western end of the Kitchener to a junction at London East with CN’s Bayview-London Dundas Subdivision, which is used for VIA’s South Main Line passenger service. For passenger service, this section is in only fair condition and unable to sustain a higher-speed service.

To bring back up to an appropriate condition for the SouthwestLynx passenger service, major track infrastructure rehabilitation is required throughout the corridor along with a number of short railway sidings that are in need of extensions and/or additions as the train frequency incrementally increases. The line has a modern centralized traffic control (CTC) signaling system which with the SouthwestLynx optimization plan will yield major benefits.
It is estimated that the upgrading of the CN Guelph Subdivision to provide more frequent service at the maximum 160-km/hour passenger speed CN allows on its track will cost approximately $500 million.

3. **CN Halton Subdivision (Bramalea-Georgetown) Capacity Expansion**

   The CN Halton Subdivision forms a central and critical part of the North Main Line used by VIA and GO's Kitchener Line trains. It is a heavily-used main component of CN's Montreal-Toronto-Chicago freight main line. Along with extensive freight, the Bramalea-Georgetown section is shared with VIA's two daily North Main Line roundtrips and, on weekdays, with 29 GO commuter trains that originate or terminate at Mount Pleasant, Georgetown or Kitchener, as well as three non-revenue GO train movements.

   To implement the high-frequency GO RER and proposed HSR services, the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) proposes to build a new freight bypass CN (Bramalea to Milton) requiring eight years of construction at an estimated cost of $8 billion.

   The SouthwestLynx alternative approach would avoid the public cost of this line and eliminate conflicts between the passenger and freight trains by constructing a fly-under between the Mount Pleasant to Georgetown stations to service the SouthwestLynx and GO Transit and undertaking some station platform improvements. Within the SouthwestLynx proposal, all passenger trains would stay on the south side of the triple-track line and keep the north track open for exclusive CN freight use until the fly-under. At that point, the CN traffic would be largely confined to the south track and the passenger trains to the north.

   By substituting SouthwestLynx proposed Toronto-Kitchener-London HPR service for the proposed HSR service, and using it to provide some of the proposed GO RER frequencies, the capacity demands on this line segment would be reduced to an extent that a fully triple-tracked line from Bramalea to Georgetown could accommodate both the passenger and CN freight services.

   The SouthwestLynx approach of triple-tracking this line segment and building the fly-under to minimize freight/passenger conflicts is a vital requirement of the SouthwestLynx North Main Line service and can be delivered at an estimated cost of $1.5 billion. It could be completed within five years or less.

4. **CN Dundas Subdivision Capacity Expansion**

   A major point of freight and passenger conflicts on the double-track CN Dundas Subdivision portion of the South Main Line is at Paris Junction, at the top of the grade out of Brantford. At various times, a combination of four passenger and freight trains will routinely pass through this point in both directions within a few minutes of each other. Sidings exist on both the north and south sides of the line, but both are approximately 2,200 metres long and are inadequate for use by today's freight trains of 3,000 metres or more.

   To eliminate this choke point, the SouthwestLynx plan requires the extension of these short sidings to Princeton to create a 13 km, highly-useful, section of four-track main line. This will not only allow for "meets" between trains operating in opposing directions, but for smooth
overtakes of the CN freight trains, which are limited to 96 km/hour, by the passenger trains, which are now allowed a maximum permissible speed of 130 km/hour.

The ability to use this four-track section for planned overtakes under CN’s “precision scheduled railroad” freight operating concept will become even more important as the passenger speed is increased to the 160-km/hour CN allows on shared-use main line trackage.

The SouthwestLynx proposed capacity expansion from Paris Junction to Princeton will cost approximately $100 million.

5. **CN-CP Woodstock-Komoka Line Consolidation**

An opportunity to address several intercity and urban transportation challenges is available in what would be the largest capital project in the first phase of Southwestlynx. It would not only yield major rail passenger and freight benefits, it would resolve significant rail crossing issues in London.

Leveraging CN and CP proximity in Woodstock and again on the west side of Komoka, the SouthwestLynx proposal identifies the opportunity to adjust existing rail operations to consolidate freight rail separate from passenger rail over a 60 km section. All within the existing rail corridors a 60 km dedicated 200 km/h passenger rail section can be created while still allowing CP and CN freight operations to efficiently continue through Windsor and Sarnia and to US markets as they do today while ensuring local area agricultural and industrial shippers maintain services.

Through London, both the all-passenger CN line and the all-freight CP line would be grade separated from all the streets that now cross them, resulting in improved automotive and pedestrian flow on those streets. A minimum of five grade-separated crossings on the CP line and seven on the CN line would require construction.

An order-of-magnitude cost estimate is $2 billion. Notwithstanding the construction implications this significant investment would significantly benefit the citizens of London, rail passengers, as well as CN/CP freight operations.

6. **Continuous Corridor Enhancements**

There are other infrastructure projects that can be undertaken to increase the speed and the reliability of the Southwestlynx rail passenger services, although none would produce the dramatic benefits that can be derived from the projects described above. However, in concert with these larger projects, they can assist in incrementally reduced schedule times and further enhanced by minimizing conflicts between the passenger and freight trains. The SouthwestLynx plan has identified a number of station, crossovers and switching locations where safety, speed and capacity can be significantly enhanced incrementally.

Costing this aspect of the first phase of the Southwestlynx project will be difficult until the situation is analyzed by both the freight and passenger operators, and the number of replacements determined. Nonetheless, it should be a component of the project on the basis that every minute of time that can be incrementally bled from the running times translates into greater passenger attraction and revenue. At a high level, significant station improvements at
the locations identified may well cost upwards of $20 million, crossing and switching improvements perhaps $2 million for each location.

A SouthwestLynx Demonstration

A two-part demonstration project has been outlined in the report to provide opportunity for early improvements and to establish a template for the roll out of the full SouthwestLynx program:

- A joint VIA-GO “pool agreement” to blend their operations on the Toronto-Kitchener-London North Main Line route to provide faster, more frequent service at lower passenger cost; and
- Development of a multi-county network of intercommunity transportation connections between major points on the two VIA Rail routes and numerous off-line Oxford County points, which can act as a template for other county, regional and municipal governments.

Combined, these demonstration project options could be used to validate the approach proposed in SouthwestLynx.

The SouthwestLynx Advantage

Southwestern Ontario’s public transportation access and mobility require timely and strategic action now. The provincial government is contemplating the construction of a high-cost HSR that will not be fully operational for at least a decade. Further, there is no indication of how the Province proposes to substantially address intercommunity transportation requirements in concert with their HSR proposal. Southwestern Ontario’s need for an alternative that will deliver more effective, more affordable mobility quicker is urgent. SouthwestLynx is that fulsome alternative.

By considering key improvements within both rail corridors SouthwestLynx can be the catalyst to accelerate GO Transit Rail service improvements not only to Kitchener along the north rail corridor but to Hamilton, Brantford and Niagara as well through the south rail which is given no consideration in the Province’s HSR proposal. This is possible because the very obstacles to those long awaited service improvement are leveraged by the SouthwestLynx plan strategically. The result is a public transportation investment that will serve Kitchener and Southwestern Ontario while also enhancing service opportunity to over 1 million more people than the Province of Ontario’s HSR proposal. All while also solving key freight movement issues across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area as well as across Southwestern Ontario.

Moreover, by investing in partnership with the Canada’s Class 1 Railways (CN/CP) every dollar invested enhances the freight rail capacity through these key corridors as well as the passenger rail capacity.

Partnerships and Cooperation

There are three prerequisites for the implementation of SouthwestLynx:
- Complete replacement of the Southwestern Ontario rail passenger fleet with new, proven high-performance diesel-electric locomotives, rolling stock, and rail infrastructure improvements;
- Coordination and cooperation among the Government of Canada, federally-owned VIA Rail, the Government of Ontario and provincially-owned Metrolinx/GO Transit; and
- A new governance and service delivery strategy based on the successful concepts employed on three integrated California high-performance rail corridors and Southwestern Ontario’s SWIFT ultra-high-speed broadband project.

Multiple infrastructure upgrading projects must be undertaken on the two passenger rail routes linking Southwestern Ontario with the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. These projects may be spaced over a number of years, dependent on available public funding. These include the easing of several speed-restricting curves, grade separating numerous road crossings, station improvements and track additions to minimize or eliminate conflicts between passenger and freight trains.

Each project will incrementally and progressively contribute to reducing current rail journey times, increasing rail frequency, reducing operating costs, reducing government operating subsidies and reducing passenger fares. All would work hand-in-glove with new, high-performance locomotives and rolling stock to offer benefits equal to or greater than those promised under the controversial Ontario HSR proposal.

Successful integrated public transportation services, as SouthwestLynx proposes, are highly complex in nature. Multiple levels of jurisdiction, varied stakeholders interests, complex funding and operating partnerships will be crucial to success. SouthwestLynx incents cooperation because its plan offers the potential to significantly advance rail freight and rail passenger transportation across Southwestern Ontario and to Hamilton, Brantford and the Niagara Peninsula.

Further, by including strong intercommunity transportation services serving both as passenger rail feeder routes and community connection services, Southwestern Ontario can have the broader high quality transportation service it needs and deserves. These intercommunity services need not be solely traditional municipally operated systems. In fact, a system of complementary municipal and contracted services in partnership with the existing motor coach industry has considerable potential.

**SouthwestLynx Governance**

SouthwestLynx is premised on a Southwestern Ontario centric transportation solution that connects to Toronto, not a Toronto centric solution as envisioned by the province’s HSR proposal. We believe it must be governed as such.

Like Ontario Northland serves Northern Ontario and Metrolinx serves the Greater Golden Horseshoe, SouthwestLynx must be a Southwestern Ontario based entity premised on serving the needs of Southwestern Ontario. As a distinct entity, its Board would comprise key funding partners and stakeholders including the Government of Canada, Government of Ontario, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, the Mayors of Southwest Ontario, Indigenous Communities
and appropriate business representatives. Similar successful governance models indicate this approach is not only viable, it is essential to the successful planning, implementation and operations that will be SouthwestLynx.

Moving Forward

A new Provincial government does not resolve the HSR issues, nor does it ensure firm action and cooperation necessary to addresses the Southwestern Ontario transportation issues identified in the Oxford reports.

The SouthwestLynx proposal was developed as a means to demonstrate that viable alternatives to the Province’s proposed HSR do exist. SouthwestLynx is a practical, affordable plan that can be rapidly deployed to provide the public transportation access and mobility vital to Southwestern Ontario’s economic vitality, community wellbeing and environmental health.

To ensure consideration of the SouthwestLynx proposal and the related freight opportunities raised in this report, and the prior Steel Corridors of Opportunity, Empowering Ontario’s Short Line Railways and New Directions, two avenues for action include:

- active pursuit of the HSR EA Terms of Reference expansion to include all viable comparative route alternatives; and
- active pursuit of the required coordination and cooperation necessary between all stakeholders necessary to address the transportation system issues raised in Oxford’s transportation compendium.

High Speed Rail Environmental Assessment Terms of Reference

The Corridor Impacted Municipalities group comprising the Municipality of Thames Centre and the Townships of Zorra, East Zorra-Tavistock, and Wilmot is being coordinated by Zorra Township. The Region of Waterloo, along with the counties of Oxford and Middlesex will be working with the group to ensure a common voice. On behalf of the group, Zorra Township has approached the Ministry of Transportation to seek funding assistance to provide the technical support and capacity to peer review any and all work, as appropriate, emanating from the High Speed Rail Program Office on this file. While receptive, the Ministry has not provided any indication of funding at this time.

Given the potential for a lame duck Council situation in late July, and the complete uncertainty of any provincial funding, it is proposed that Oxford County work with Zorra Township to fund the formation of an appropriate expert Peer Review Team. Upset cost exposure to ensure able action through the remainder of 2018 is estimated at a net $100,000. Any further funding requirements would be identified through the 2019 Budget and Business Plan process.

Southwestern Ontario Transportation Dialogue and Relationship Program

A change in provincial government does not resolve the issues raised to date. The advancement of a transportation solution for Southwestern Ontario will not just happen. To encourage, and as appropriate stimulate, the necessary dialogue it will be necessary to seek the advice and support in approaching key industry players along with the Federal and Provincial governments and their agencies (VIA Rail and Metrolinx respectively). Staff believe
this initiative requires a level of sustained action that is not practical without strategic advice and support. It is proposed that Oxford County lead the development and implementation of an effective Southwestern Ontario Transportation Dialogue and Relationship program. To develop a plan and begin implementation an additional $75,000 is proposed. Working with the Corridor Impacted Municipalities group, we will seek municipal partners through the Western Wardens Caucus, the Mayors of Southwest Ontario, the City of Hamilton and the Regions of Waterloo and Niagara. Any further funding would be identified through the 2019 Budget and Business Plan process and take into consideration any partnership funding support available through the aforementioned municipal group.

**Conclusions**

The complex issues raised in this report are largely the result of years of evolution in the absence of a long term strategy, public policy and public/private investment that ensures:

- A rail network that addresses rail freight needs and opportunities;
- A rail network that concurrently provides effective and integrated passenger rail;
- A fully integrated intercommunity transportation system.

A system that addresses the efficient movement of people and goods across Southwestern Ontario is in the broader public interest, is fundamental to addressing climate change and should be of significant concern at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. Such a system should also be of significant interest and concern amongst the freight and passenger transportation system providers (CN, CP, VIA Rail, Metrolinx and the Motor Coach Industry).

There is nothing technologically or legislatively untested in the SouthwestLynx plan. In fact the work undertaken cites three successful U.S. examples that demonstrate all elements are service proven.

This report demonstrates that SouthwestLynx is a viable alternative worthy of consideration within a proper Individual Environmental Assessment of the High Speed Rail proposal. Moreover, it demonstrates strategic solutions that can significantly advance the economic, community and environmental wellbeing of not only Southwestern Ontario residents and businesses but its many service partners, industries, and stakeholders. As such, staff recommend that Oxford County submit this report and its attachments to the High Speed Rail Program Office in support of Oxford’s prior position that Southwestern Ontario requires a fully integrated public transportation solution and that the HSR EA Terms of Reference must include the full and comparative assessment of alternatives to the proposed HSR corridor including the optimization of existing rail corridors.

Staff also recommend Council approval of initial funding in the amount of $175,000 to be used to establish a High Speed Rail EA Peer Review Team in coordination with the Corridor Impacted Municipalities group and to develop and undertake a Southwestern Ontario Transportation Dialogue and Relationship program as described herein.
Finally, staff recommend that Oxford County seek the support of Oxford’s Area Municipalities, the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR), the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC), the Mayors of Southwestern Ontario (MOSO), the Region of Waterloo, City of Hamilton, Region of Niagara, the MP (Oxford), the MPP (Oxford), and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Staff would also inform and seek the support of interested community stakeholders.

**SIGNATURE**

Approved for submission:

Original signed by: _____________________________

Peter M. Crockett, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1  SouthwestLynx Proposal Map
Attachment 2  SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario, June 2018
Recognizing the critical role mobility plays in achieving Oxford’s vision of economic, community and environmental sustainability, Oxford County commissioned Greg Gormick, On Track Strategies, to develop a four-part Southwestern Ontario transportation compendium. As a body of work, the compendium outlines the key issues facing public and freight transportation, freight mobility and efficiency across Southwestern Ontario, and poses actions that would set the stage for positive transformation.
SouthwestLynx:
Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario

As the fourth and final of Greg Gormick’s commissioned reports, “SouthwestLynx: An Integrated High-Performance Public Transportation for Southwestern Ontario” is the anchor report underlying the rationale for Oxford County’s commission of the entire compendium.

Released in June 2018, the SouthwestLynx report presents the unquestionable viability of High Performance Rail (HPR) complemented by a fully integrated intercommunity transportation system as a logical, practical, affordable and deliverable public transportation solution for Southwestern Ontario.

Intercommunity Transportation

Community connectivity and mobility is critical to the vitality of small urban/rural Southwestern Ontario. SouthwestLynx recognizes the dramatic reduction to intercommunity busing that has occurred since 2009 and proposes to re-establish intercommunity connections across Southwestern Ontario.

In partnership with municipalities, the Province of Ontario and the motor coach industry, an integrated intercommunity transportation system can provide key transportation links between communities and to the existing passenger rail corridors for residents across Southwestern Ontario. This connects the residents of small urban/rural Southwestern Ontario to the large urban centres, to each other, to work, to healthcare services and to shopping, recreation and entertainment activities.
Passenger Rail

SouthwestLynx proposes a High Performance Rail (HPR) solution that can be accommodated within the existing rail corridors serving Southwestern Ontario.

SouthwestLynx identifies five key constraint areas within the existing North Mainline (Toronto - Brampton - Guelph - Kitchener - Stratford - St. Marys - London) and South Mainline (Toronto - Hamilton - Brantford - Woodstock - Ingersoll - London) rail corridors. SouthwestLynx then identifies specific improvement opportunities for the CN-Halton Subdivision and CN-Guelph Subdivision along the North Mainline and Bayview Junction, the CN-Dundas Subdivision on the South Mainline, as well as a CN-CP Woodstock-Komoka line consolidation to dramatically improve freight and passenger rail travel in/out and through London.
SouthwestLynx proposes a fully integrated public transportation solution that will serve the people and businesses of Southwestern Ontario. As well, because both existing rail corridors are utilized, the SouthwestLynx proposal enhances the passenger rail opportunities to more than 1 million more people in Hamilton, Brantford and Niagara Region.

**Key elements of the SouthwestLynx Plan**

- Practical, affordable and implementable alternative to High Speed Rail
- Optimizes existing north and south rail corridors, proposing solutions to key capacity constraint areas including:
  - CN-Halton Subdivision
  - CN-Guelph Subdivision
  - Bayview Junction
  - CN-Dundas Subdivision
  - CN-CP Woodstock-Komoka
- Major passenger rail service improvements
  - **Toronto to London:** increase from 7 return trips daily to 30 return trips daily
  - **Toronto to Windsor:** increase from 4 return trips daily to 8 return trips daily
  - **Toronto to Sarnia:** increase from 1 return trip daily to 4 return trips daily
- Enhances existing rail service to:
  - **Toronto to Brantford/Woodstock/Ingersoll:** increase from 5 return trips daily to 15 return trips daily
  - **Toronto to Kitchener/Stratford/St. Marys:** increase from 2 return trips daily to 15 return trips daily
- **Southwestern Ontario-centric** proposal that maintains passenger rail connections to Woodstock, Ingersoll, Stratford and St. Marys
- Fully integrated intercommunity transportation network connecting people across Southwestern Ontario
- Leverages GTHA planned rail improvements to enhance passenger rail opportunities to over 1 million people in Hamilton, Brantford and Niagara
- Enhances freight rails capacity and negates costly options that delay other planned works
Building a Transportation Strategy for Southwestern Ontario

Additional Reports Supporting SouthwestLynx Proposal

New Directions: Advancing Southwestern Ontario’s Public Transportation Opportunities
Released in June 2016, with an update in August 2017, “New Directions: Advancing Southwestern Ontario’s Public Transportation Opportunities” was timed to inform public policy and funding decisions on the future of our national and provincial transportation systems. The New Directions report proposes the design of a fully integrated public transportation system that contributes to Southwestern Ontario’s competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

Empowering Ontario’s Short Line Railways
Released in February 2017, “Empowering Ontario’s Short Line Railways” tells the story of short line railways in Ontario: understanding their value and understanding their challenges. Short line railways evolved as Class 1 railways exited the business of short rail operations. The report says that now is time for meaningful dialogue on the future of short line rail.

Steel Corridors of Opportunity
“Steel Corridors of Opportunity: Maximizing the Benefits of Southwestern Ontario’s freight railways” was released in June 2018. The report focuses on Southwestern Ontario’s freight railway system, which is a vital component of our economic, community and environmental prosperity.
Oxford County’s advocacy role

Oxford County Council continues to demonstrate municipal leadership through the adoption of, and ongoing financial support to advance, the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan and its related commitments to achieving 100% Renewable Energy by 2050, Zero Waste and Zero Poverty. Through these commitments and ongoing support, Council has also recognized the need to influence public policy well beyond its borders, including advocacy for Southwestern Ontario.

Oxford County’s transportation reports are available for download at www.oxfordcounty.ca

Acknowledgments

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