

CORRIGAN'S CORNER:

THE FUTURE OF LONDON'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The London Long Term Transportation Corridor Protection Study is arguably the most important decision facing Council this term. At stake is the future of transportation in London for the next 50 years. On June 4th, 2001 at a combined meeting of the City's Planning and Environment and Transportation (ETC) Committees residents of London made presentations on the Transportation Corridor Protection Study. The schedule called for a final report and recommendation from City Staff to be presented to ETC on June 18, 2001. Due to the submissions and questions from members of Council the final report has been delayed until September 24th, 2001.

The City has adopted, as part of its transportation strategy, a 15% reduction goal for Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV). There is concern that the City will not be able to make that target. If we fail to make this 15 percent reduction there will be incredible pressure on London's transportation system.

In the draft report, Option 1 calls for the building a "Super Grid" or network of 4 and 6 lane arterial roads. Most arterial roads will be designated 6 lanes to protect the ability of the City to expand transportation arteries to allow traffic and commerce to flow efficiently. This option is not the Consultant's recommendation as it reportedly does not provide enough capacity.

Option 2 calls for the additional expansion of Airport Road to a 4 lane expressway. Fortunately City planners and politicians had the foresight to protect the corridors necessary to build this expressway to service industry on this Industrial corridor. Option 2 also calls for the building of an expressway between Westdelborne and Woodhull Road to connect the 402 and Commissioners Road. There are serious cost concerns with Option 2 including the bridging of the Dingman Creek valley and impacts on environmentally sensitive areas. A West-end expressway will have a dramatic impact on the rural character of the area and on future residential and commercial development. However, there are heavy costs if the City does not have the ability to efficiently move traffic.

Option 3 calls for all of the above with the addition of an expressway north of London which will effectively create a full ring road. There is a problem that the highway would have to be built outside of the City's jurisdiction. There are also serious financial and environmental costs associated with building a full ring road. Critics argue that studies show that ring roads generate more traffic and urban sprawl and do not relieve traffic congestion.

The traffic consultant states that if the 15 percent SOV reduction target is not met the City will need the added capacity of all the above roads and expressways to accommodate growth over the next 50 years as the City reaches a projected population of 675,000. Hard choices will have to be made with respect to London's future transportation needs. I would like to hear your views on this subject and any other City issue. I can be reached at (o) 661-1558 or (r) 652-0973.