

Quarry haul route meeting draws a crowd

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The issue of haul routes for the proposed Mountsberg quarry turned out to be a hot topic, as a large number of area residents turned out for a Public Information Centre (PIC) hosted by St. Marys Cement at Royal Botanical Gardens last Thursday.

About 125 people studied several placards at the first of four public meetings slated to select potential haul routes from the proposed quarry at the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. Many stopped to discuss individual concerns with consultants or St. Marys CBM staff while others filled out comment cards, about 55 of which were collected by the study team including members of the transportation consulting firm, BA Group of Toronto.

"The meeting was very well attended; we had a steady stream of people throughout the night," Paul Sarjeant, BA's senior transportation engineer said of the three-hour session.

Many residents questioned the location of the meeting, noting that the RBG is more than 20 kilometres from the proposed quarry site. But John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys CBM Aggregates, suggested that future haul route meetings will be held nearer the site, especially since the company is proposing a smaller study area for the haul routes.

One of the placards drawing a lot interest at last week's meeting was a map of a proposed new study area bounded by Campbellville Road, the 10th Concession, Hwy. 6 and Guelph Line. The study area proposed by the City of Hamilton's terms of reference for the haul route study is much more encompassing, including an area from Hwy. 401 in the north to QEW and Hwy. 403 in the south, and from Hwy. 6 in the west to Guelph Line in the east.

The transportation consultants justified the proposed reduction in the area by referring to the potential growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that indicates the majority of construction projects over the next 15 years will be in Halton and Peel regions. That means the aggregate market will be primarily east of the proposed site, making Hwy. 401 the logical route for about 80 per cent of the product. Under this scenario, the Campbellville area of Milton would bear the largest percentage of quarry truck traffic.

Draft haul routes haven't yet been identified but will be featured at the second public meeting, likely in late July or August, Sarjeant said. He predicted that the study will conclude in October.

Flint criticized the company's move to reduce the study area, saying that the terms of reference for the first public meeting clearly state its purpose as being "to engage the public" and give residents an opportunity to identify concerns and issues about truck traffic. He also accused St. Marys Cement of "blatantly disregarding the process" outlined in the terms of reference and said he was disappointed that no presentations were made at the meeting.

"I would have liked to see a presentation and open discussion from the floor." Restricting questions from the public to a one-on-one with consultants doesn't allow "for a public airing of the issues," he charged.

Flint also said that public notice in local newspapers did not meet time deadlines outlined in the terms.

In a letter to the Combined Aggregate Review Team (CART), a group with representation from the affected municipalities of Hamilton, Milton, Burlington and Halton Region, Flint detailed the aggregate company's failure to abide by the terms of reference.

"We have a copy of his letter," Sarjeant said. "We understand the level of frustration out there and we will make every effort to accommodate concerns."

Hamilton senior planner Stan Holiday said he has asked members of CART and various groups, such as the Niagara Escarpment Commission, area Conservation Authorities and school boards, for their reaction to "how the proponent has or has not addressed requirements of the terms of reference" in the running of the first public meeting. He expects responses by next week and will post them on the city's website. After reviewing the responses, the city will meet with St. Marys officials to discuss the haul route study. The proposed reduction of the study area will also be a topic at the upcoming meeting, Holiday said.

St. Marys isn't obligated to abide by the terms of reference drawn up by representatives of the affected municipalities. But Flint said there has been "implied acceptance" by the company. The danger to the company of not respecting the terms is that its application to the city could be put at risk, he added.