

# Road warriors

Flamborough Review Editorial

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Kudos to the City of Burlington for (finally) committing to a plan of action on the expansion of Waterdown Road. The decision to widen the north-south thoroughfare that connects Waterdown and Aldershot has been a difficult one, but ultimately crucial to alleviating current and anticipated traffic between the two communities.

Burlington city staff reports on what to do about Waterdown Road date back as far as 1994. Then, the recommendation was to protect the rural character of North Aldershot as a "distinct identifiable area." Residents along Waterdown Road continue to fight to protect the rural nature of the road -- with good reason. Several Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), including the Bruce Trail, the 23-Acres and the Niagara Escarpment, run adjacent to the roadway.

But things change, and the development promised by OPA 28 in Waterdown, approved by the provincial cabinet in 2002, is now imminent. In addition, Burlington has plans for several projects that will add to the Aldershot area's traffic load, including a residential development on Flatt Road, the development of 300 acres of employment lands west of King Road, the expansion of the Aldershot GO station and the addition of a westbound interchange at Hwy. 403.

And while the majority of the traffic will indeed be commuter-based, there will also be the additional load of west Burlington residents migrating to the Clappison's Power Centre once the Aldershot Canadian Tire and Zellers relocate in the fall.

A number of area residents continue to challenge the criteria used by city staff to determine current and projected traffic patterns, and the distribution of traffic along these roads and assert that the numbers utilized by engineers are exaggerated by as much as 50 per cent. Suggestions that Hwy. 6 and Brant Street can potentially handle more traffic, however, just aren't realistic. Burlington councillor John Taylor, whose ward includes the already severely congested Brant Street, voted for the Waterdown Road expansion; to add further volume to Hwy. 6 would simply be unsafe.

The decision to construct three lanes, with the roadbed wide enough to accommodate four lanes in the future is economically sound; to commit only to three lanes in the knowledge that traffic loads will eventually require the construction of an additional lane, would be short-sighted and costly.

But the challenge now is twofold. First, it must be determined how the cost of the Waterdown Road expansion will be shared between the two communities. A 95-5 percent split of the estimated \$26 million cost, with Hamilton bearing the lion's share of the financial load (and which Burlington has budgeted for), isn't feasible.

In addition, the fight to maintain the road's character is important; plans to manage increased traffic must include features such as bike paths, turning lanes and medians to keep the speed of vehicles using the road in check. After all, the safety of members of both communities will be riding on it.