

A dark gray background with a network of white dots connected by thin white lines, forming a web-like pattern. The dots are of varying sizes and are distributed across the entire background.

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Welcome to the Online Public Information Centre #1

Municipal Class Environmental
Assessment Study for Merritt Road and
Rice Road in Pelham, Thorold and Welland

March 24, 2021

(Live Presentation 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM)



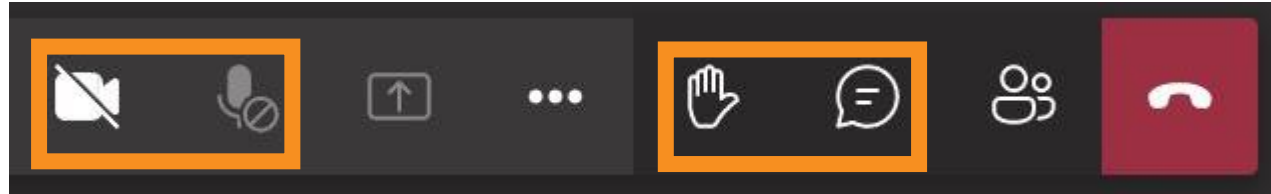
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Housekeeping Items

- When joining the online meeting, the attendees will be muted. We request you to please turn off your camera.
- There will be an opportunity at the end of the presentation to ask any questions or submit comments. Please use the chat function to type in your questions/comments or click on “Raise hand”.



- This presentation is being recorded and will be posted on the project webpage.
- In case if you would like to submit your feedback later, the presentation materials and an online comment form are available on the project webpage: <https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-37/default.aspx>

Presentation Outline

- Introductions
- Study Overview
- Overview of Road Segments
- Municipal Class EA Process & Study Timeline
- Provincial, Regional and Local Policies
- Class EA Phase 1 – Problem or Opportunity
- Constraints and Opportunities
- Technical Studies to be Completed
- Possible Cross-sections for the Road Segments
- How to Get Involved in this Study and Next Steps
- Questions?

Introductions

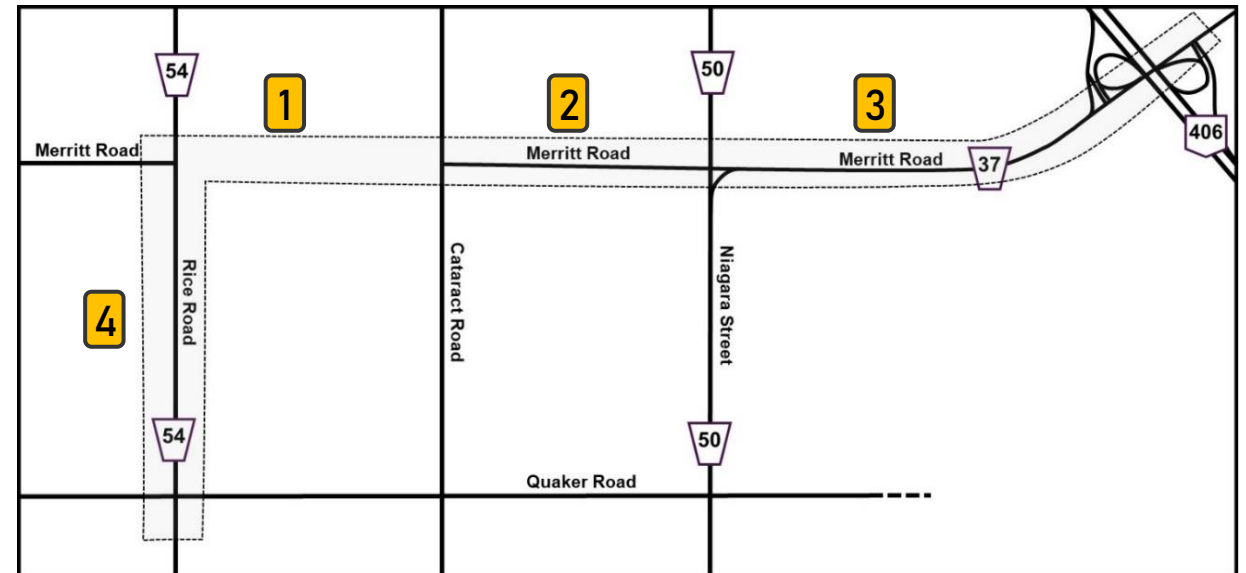
Niagara Region	Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions
Maged Elmadhoon, M.Eng., P.Eng. Manager, Transportation Planning	Jeff Suggett, M. Sc. Project Manager
Sulaf Alkarawi Associate Director, Transportation Planning	John McGill, P.Eng., PTOE, RSP Project Advisor
	Mir Ahsan Talpur, M.Env.Sc., EP Environmental Planner

Study Overview

The Niagara Region has initiated an environmental assessment study for improvements to Merritt Road and Rice Road as a result of proposed developments in the Town of Pelham, the City of Thorold and the City of Welland. The study is being carried out as a Schedule 'C' project in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process (Class EA). This study will address the requirements of Phases 1 to 4 of the Class EA process.

Building upon the recommendations of the 2017 Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan, this study will propose improvements and active transportation facilities to the following segments of Merritt Road and Rice Road:

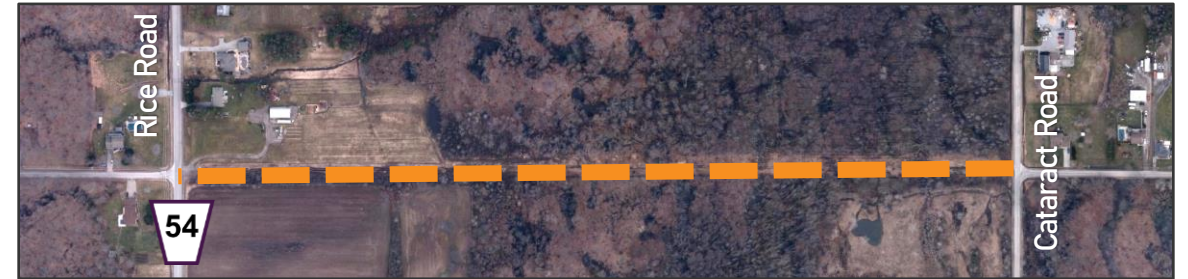
- Segment 1 – Merritt Road between Rice Road and Cataract Road
- Segment 2 – Merritt Road between Cataract Road and Merrittville Highway / Niagara Street
- Segment 3 – Merritt Road between Merrittville Highway / Niagara Street and Highway 406
- Segment 4 – Rice Road between Merritt Road and Quaker Road



Road Segments 1 & 2

Segment 1 – Merritt Road between Rice Road (Regional Road 54) and Cataract Road

- This segment functions as an unopened road allowance between Rice Road and Cataract Road.
- It is located within the Town of Pelham and City of Thorold and spans an approximate distance of 800m.
- It was identified for new road construction along with active transportation facilities.



Segment 2 – Merritt Road between Cataract Road and Merrittville Highway (Regional Road 50)/Niagara Street



Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

- This segment functions as a two-lane, rural, local, undivided roadway with a posted speed limit of 50km/h.
- It is located entirely within City of Thorold and spans an approximate distance of 800m.
- It was identified for improvements along with active transportation facilities.

Road Segments 3 & 4

Segment 3 – Merritt Road (Regional Road 37) between Merrittville Highway (Regional Road 50)/Niagara Street and Highway 406

- This segment functions as a two-lane, rural, arterial, undivided roadway with a posted speed limit of 60km/h.
- It is located within the City of Thorold and spans an approximate distance of 1.80km.
- This segment was identified for improvements along with active transportation facilities.



Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

Segment 4 – Rice Road (Regional Road 54) between 200m north of Merritt Road and Quaker Road

- This segment functions as a two-lane, rural, collector, undivided roadway with a posted speed limit of 50 km/h.
- It is located in the Town of Pelham and the City of Welland and spans an approximate distance of 1.20km.
- This segment was identified for improvements along with active transportation facilities.



Municipal Class EA Process & Timeline

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notice of study commencement ▪ Problem or opportunity statement ▪ Public Information Centre #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inventory natural, social and economic exiting conditions ▪ Identify and evaluate alternative solutions ▪ Identify preferred solution ▪ Public Information Centre #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inventory natural, social and economic exiting conditions ▪ Identify and evaluate alternative design concepts for preferred solution ▪ Identify preferred design concept ▪ Public Information Centre #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Study process and findings in Environmental Study Report (ESR) ▪ Notice of Study Completion ▪ Place ESR on public record for a minimum of 30-day review period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proceed to the detailed design and construction of the project ▪ Monitor environmental provisions and commitments
Winter 2021	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Fall 2021 / Winter 2022	TBD



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Consultation Process

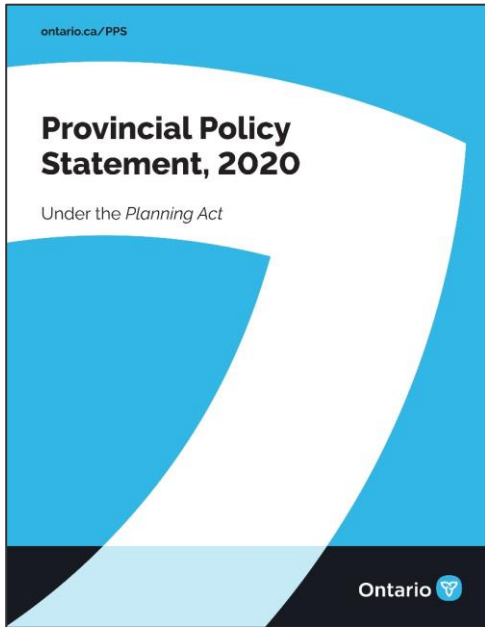
Consultation with the public is a key element of the Class EA process. Public will be invited to participate at various planned points of contact throughout this study. Given the uncertainty associated with the pandemic, most of the future consultation and communications with the public will be completed in a virtual format. In addition to the public, the following groups will be consulted throughout the study:

- Indigenous Nations
- Provincial Government Agencies (for example, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks)
- Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
- Various staff and elected officials from the Niagara Region, the Town of Pelham, and the City of Thorold and the City of Welland
- Emergency Services
- Active Transportation Committees
- Utility Companies
- Special Interest Groups (for example, agricultural society)

Points of Public Contact

Notice of Study Commencement
Notice of Public Information Centre #1
Public Information Centre #1
Notice of Public Information Centre #2
Public Information Centre #2
Notice of Public Information Centre #3
Public Information Centre #3
Notice of Study Completion
Environmental Study Report

Provincial Planning Policies



Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) provides policy direction on the matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development.



Growth Plan (2020)

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) contains specific policies and directions regarding transportation infrastructure, land use planning, urban form, housing, natural heritage and resource protection to be considered by municipalities in their planning activities.

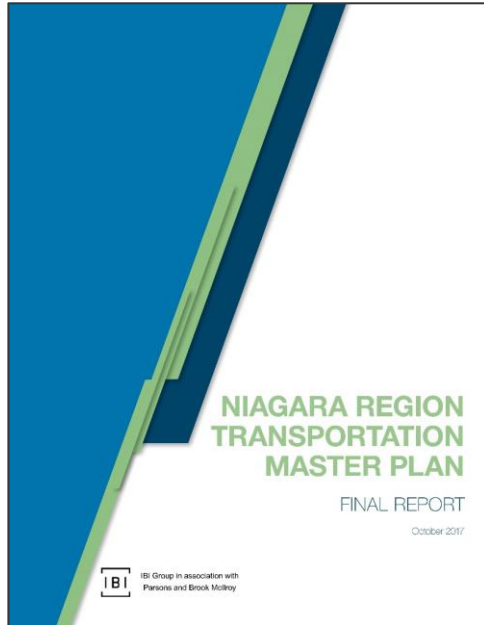
This study is consistent with the relevant policies of the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). The study aims to propose transportation improvements while addressing/minimizing impacts on natural, cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

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Regional Planning Policies



Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (2017)

The Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (2017) is a strategic planning document that sets out an action plan to address future transportation needs through pedestrian and cycling facilities, transit, and an integrated network of roads and highways.



The Niagara Region Official Plan (2014)

The Niagara Region Official Plan (2014) contains objectives, policies and mapping that implement the Niagara Region's approach to managing growth, growing the economy, protecting the natural environment, resources and agricultural land, and providing necessary infrastructure.

The need for the proposed road improvements were identified within the Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (2017). The Study is consistent with the relevant objectives and policies of the Niagara Region Official Plan (2014), as it aims to propose transportation improvements while addressing/minimizing impacts on natural, cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

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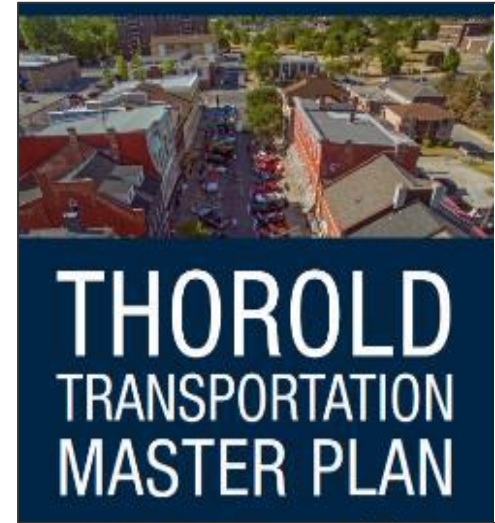
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Local Planning Policies – City of Thorold

Transportation Master Plan (2020)

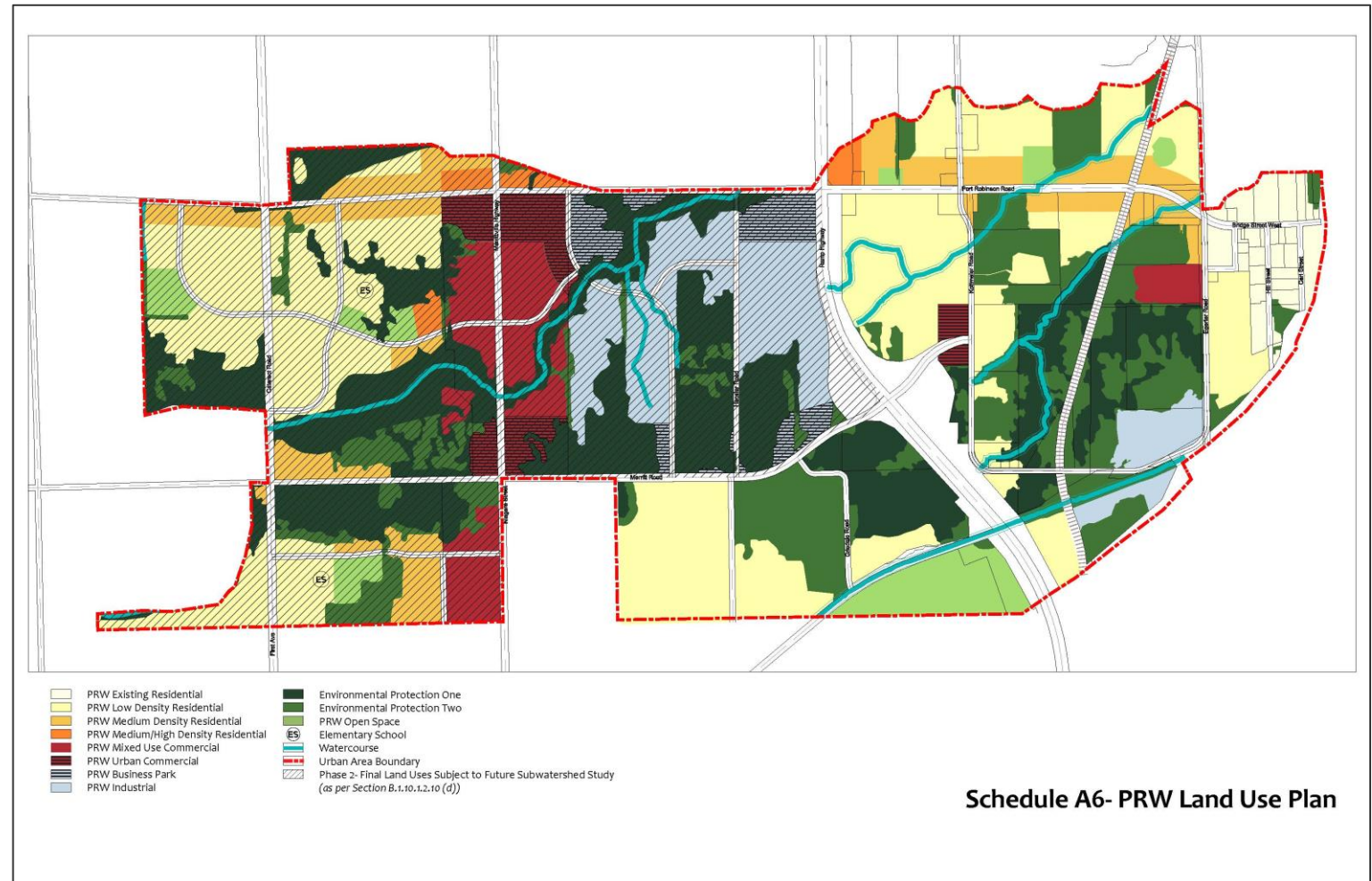
The recently completed (2020) City of Thorold Transportation Master Plan recommended that capacity improvements (widening) be undertaken on Merritt Road (to a four-lane cross section). Segment 2 (Merritt Road from Cataract Road to Merrittville Highway) is to be transferred to the Niagara Region, and the extension of Merritt Road between Cataract Road and Rice Road is to be constructed (Segment 1). A multi-use pathway is recommended along the entire length of Merritt Road within the City of Thorold (including the newly constructed section).



Local Planning Policies – City of Thorold

Port Robinson West Secondary Plan

The Port Robinson West Secondary Plan sets out the land-use and transportation structure and associated policies for the secondary plan area. This area includes lands roughly bounded by Port Robinson Road to the north, the Thorold-Welland border to the south, the Pelham-Thorold border to the west and the Welland Canal to the east. Direction will be sought from the Port Robinson West Urban Design guidelines for the proposed improvements for Segments 1, 2 and 3.

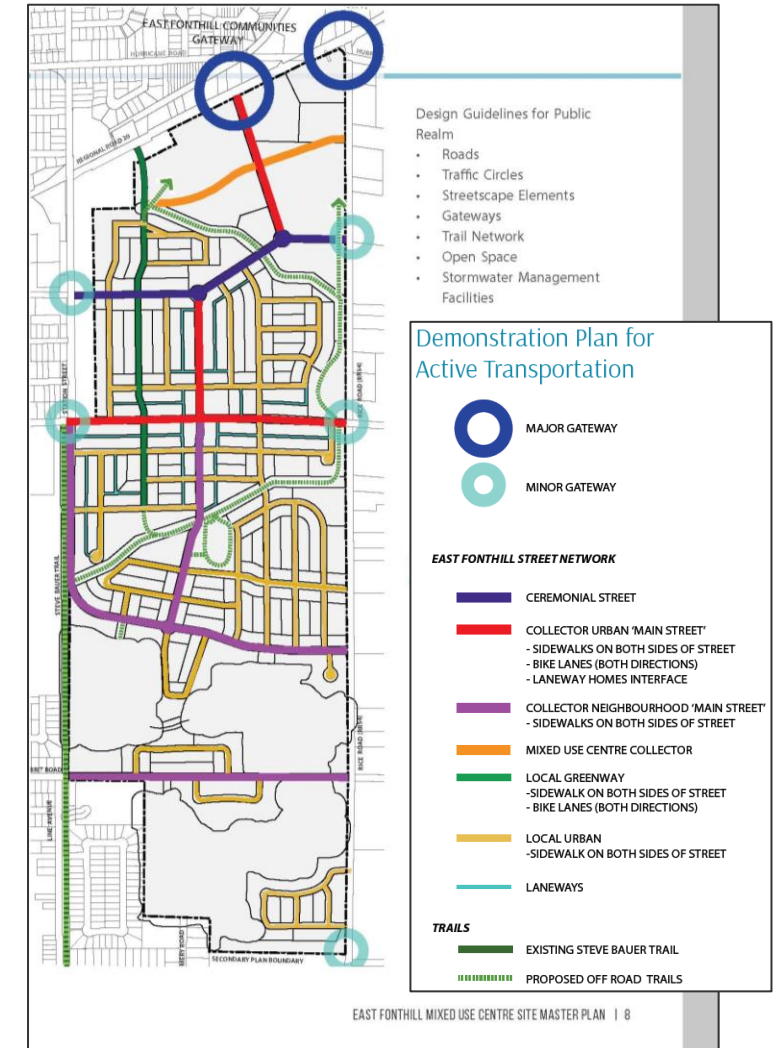


Schedule A6- PRW Land Use Plan

Local Planning Policies – Town of Pelham

East Fonthill Secondary Plan

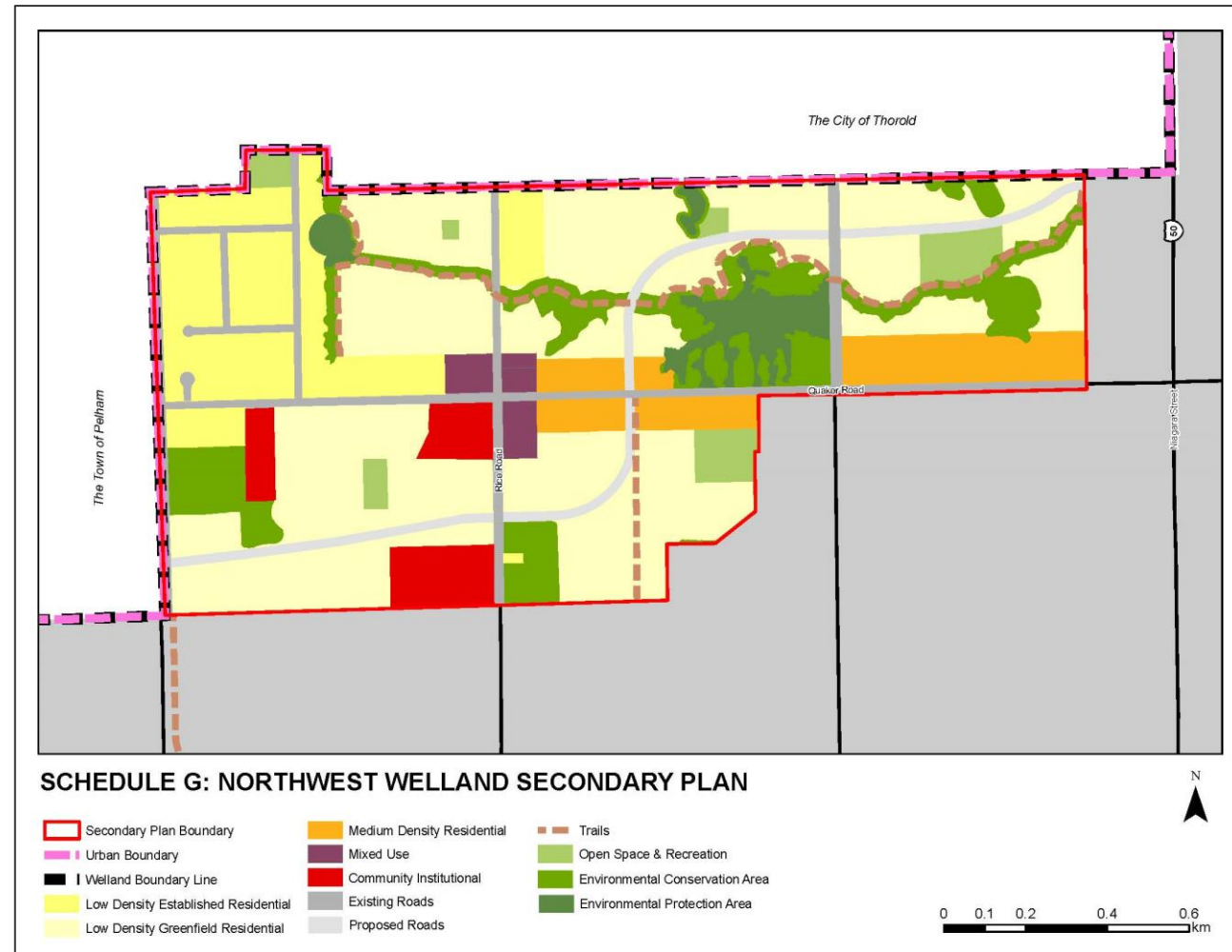
The East Fonthill Secondary Plan provides land-use and transportation framework and associated policies for the secondary plan area. This area includes lands bounded by Rice Road (Regional Road 54) to the east, Steve Bauer Trail to the west, Regional Road 20 to the north and the Pelham-Welland border to the south. Direction will be sought from East Fonthill Secondary Plan Area Urban Design Guidelines for the proposed improvements for Segment 4 – Rice Road (Regional Road 54) between Merritt Road and Quaker Road.



Local Planning Policies – City of Welland

Northwest Welland Secondary Plan

Northwest Welland Secondary Plan was recently completed, which is intended to accommodate future urban growth within the City and along a portion of Segment 4. The Northwest Welland Secondary Plan Area is generally bound by the City of Welland border with the Town of Pelham and the City of Thorold to the north, the Niagara College Welland Campus to the south, the rear lot lines of properties abutting Niagara Street to the east, and Line Avenue and Clare Avenue to the west. Once approved, this plan will propose land-use and transportation framework and associated policies for the secondary plan area.



Class EA Phase 1: Problem or Opportunity

Problem / Need Identification

The need for the proposed improvements was identified through the following documents:

- The Niagara Region's Transportation Master Plan;
- The Town of Pelham's East Fonthill Secondary Plan;
- The City of Thorold's Port Robinson Secondary Plan; and
- The City of Welland's Northwest Welland Secondary Plan.

Opportunity

The Niagara Region is committed to creating a safe, integrated and environmentally sustainable network of cycling and pedestrian facilities, transit, and roads. The Niagara Region is taking this opportunity to improve Merritt Road and Rice Road in the Town of Pelham, City of Thorold and City of Welland in order to:

- Address transportation capacity issues
- Address active transportation connectivity issues
- Address Complete Street theme

Existing and Future Right-of-Way Widths

The existing and future right-of-way widths for the four road segments are identified in the table below.

Road Segment	Existing Right-of-Way Width	Future Right-of-Way Width
Segment 1: Merritt Road between Rice Road (Regional Road 54) and Cataract Road	~20m	26m ¹
Segment 2: Merritt Road between Cataract Road and Merrittville Highway / Niagara Street	~20m	-
Segment 3: Merritt Road between Merrittville Highway / Niagara Street and Highway 406	~30m	35m ²
Segment 4: Rice Road between 200m north of Merritt Road and Quaker Road	~20m	26.2m ²

¹ City of Thorold Official Plan (2016)

² Identified in Niagara Region Official Plan (2014)

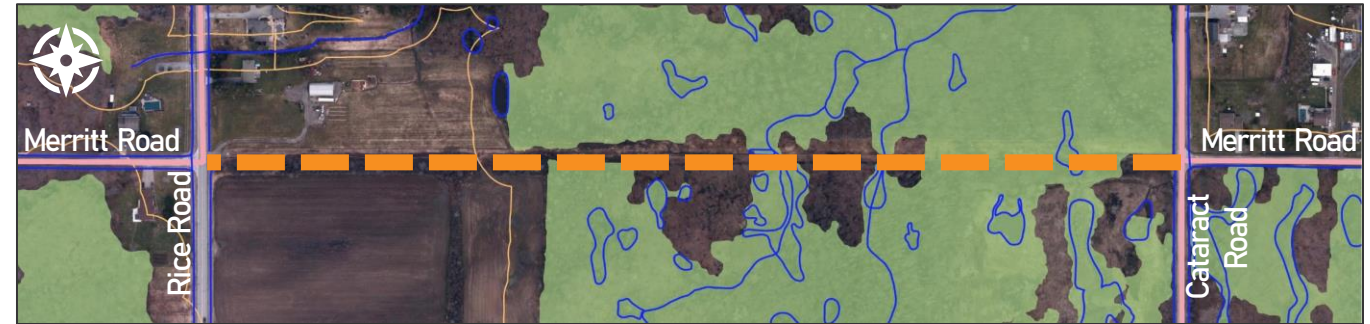
Constraints and Opportunities – Segment 1

Constraints

This unopened road allowance passes through Provincially Significant Wetland, Significant Woodland and Fish Habitat. In addition, there are low-voltage utility poles located along the north side of the road allowance.

Opportunities

In order to maintain adequate clear zone to the utility poles, there is an opportunity to provide a multi-use pathway between the utility poles and the proposed travel lanes.



- Bike Route
- Watercourse
- Regulation Wetlands
- NPCA Approximate Regulation Lands

Data Source: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

Constraints and Opportunities – Segment 2

Constraints

There are residential homes along the north side of this segment near the west end, and Provincially Significant Wetlands and Woodlands to the northeast and south. The section has narrow gravel shoulders, ditches and no active transportation facilities are provided. The existing travel lane widths are narrower than desirable for a Regional road. Trees on the south side represent a fixed object hazard.

Opportunities

There are opportunities to widen the travel lanes to meet Regional standards, provide active transportation facilities and eliminate fixed object hazards by the clearing and grubbing of trees.



- Bike Route
- Watercourse
- Regulation Wetlands
- NPCA Approximate Regulation Lands

Data Source: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

Constraints and Opportunities – Segment 3

Constraints

There are Provincially Significant Wetlands and Woodlands to the north and south of this segment. There is also a subdivision to the south (Merritt Meadows). There are limited active transportation facilities (paved shoulder for cyclists only).

Opportunities

The need to widen this section to four lanes is being investigated. There are opportunities to make the signalized intersection at the west end pedestrian friendly. As traffic volumes increase in the future, a buffer between cyclists and the adjacent travel lanes or a separate multi-use pathway will be considered.



- Bike Route
- Watercourse
- Regulation Wetlands
- NPCA Approximate Regulation Lands

Data Source: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

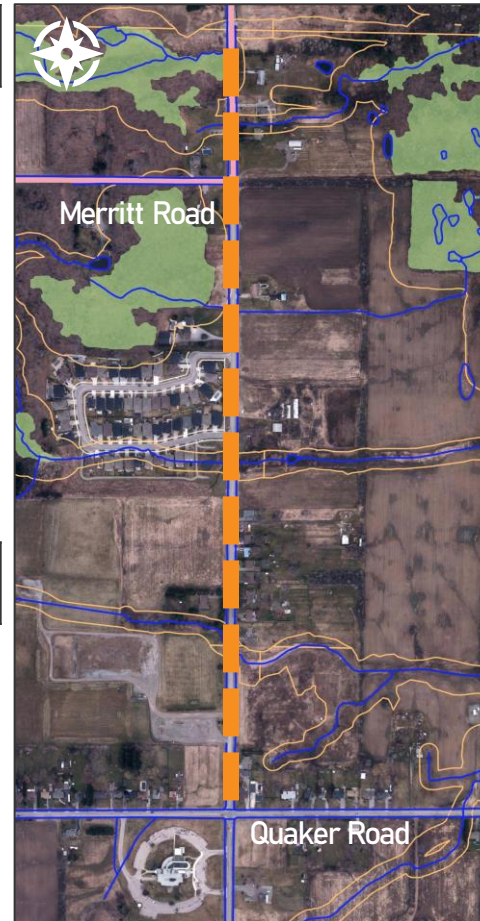
Constraints and Opportunities – Segment 4

Constraints

Lands on the east and west side of the roadway are a mixture of residential development (Rosewood Crescent subdivision), some residential homes directly fronting onto Rice Road and some vacant lands. The roadway has narrow gravel shoulders, ditches and no active transportation facilities. There are also utility poles on both sides.

Opportunities

The need to widen this section to four lanes is being investigated. There are opportunities to explore different options for active transportation (either sidewalks, bicycle lanes and/or a multi-use pathway).



- Bike Route
- Watercourse
- Regulation Wetlands
- NPCA Approximate Regulation Lands

Data Source: Niagara Peninsula
Conservation Authority
Imagery Source: ESRI Imagery

Technical Studies

Following studies will be completed as part of this Class EA Study:



A Transportation Assessment will be completed to examine existing and future transportation needs and will identify road improvements (e.g., number of lanes, alignment, etc.). An Active Transportation Plan will also be developed by applying Complete Street Design concepts to identify desirable active transportation facilities.



A Natural Environmental Assessment will be completed to understand existing natural environmental conditions within the Study Area, identify project's potential impacts on the natural environment and propose mitigation measures.



A Socio-Economic Review will be completed to identify existing land uses within the Study Area. This review will inform the evaluation of the alternatives processes.



A Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment will be completed to identify any archaeological sites/areas of archaeological potential within the Study Area and propose next steps / mitigation measures.



A Cultural Heritage Assessment will be completed to identify any protected and potential built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes within the Study Area and propose mitigation measures.



A Stormwater Management Assessment will be completed to develop existing drainage conditions using hydrologic / hydraulic model and propose stormwater management measures for the proposed road improvements.



A Health Impact Assessment will be completed by the Niagara Region to identify and mitigate potential negative health impacts of the project and maximize potential positive health impacts. This assessment will complement the Class EA Study process.

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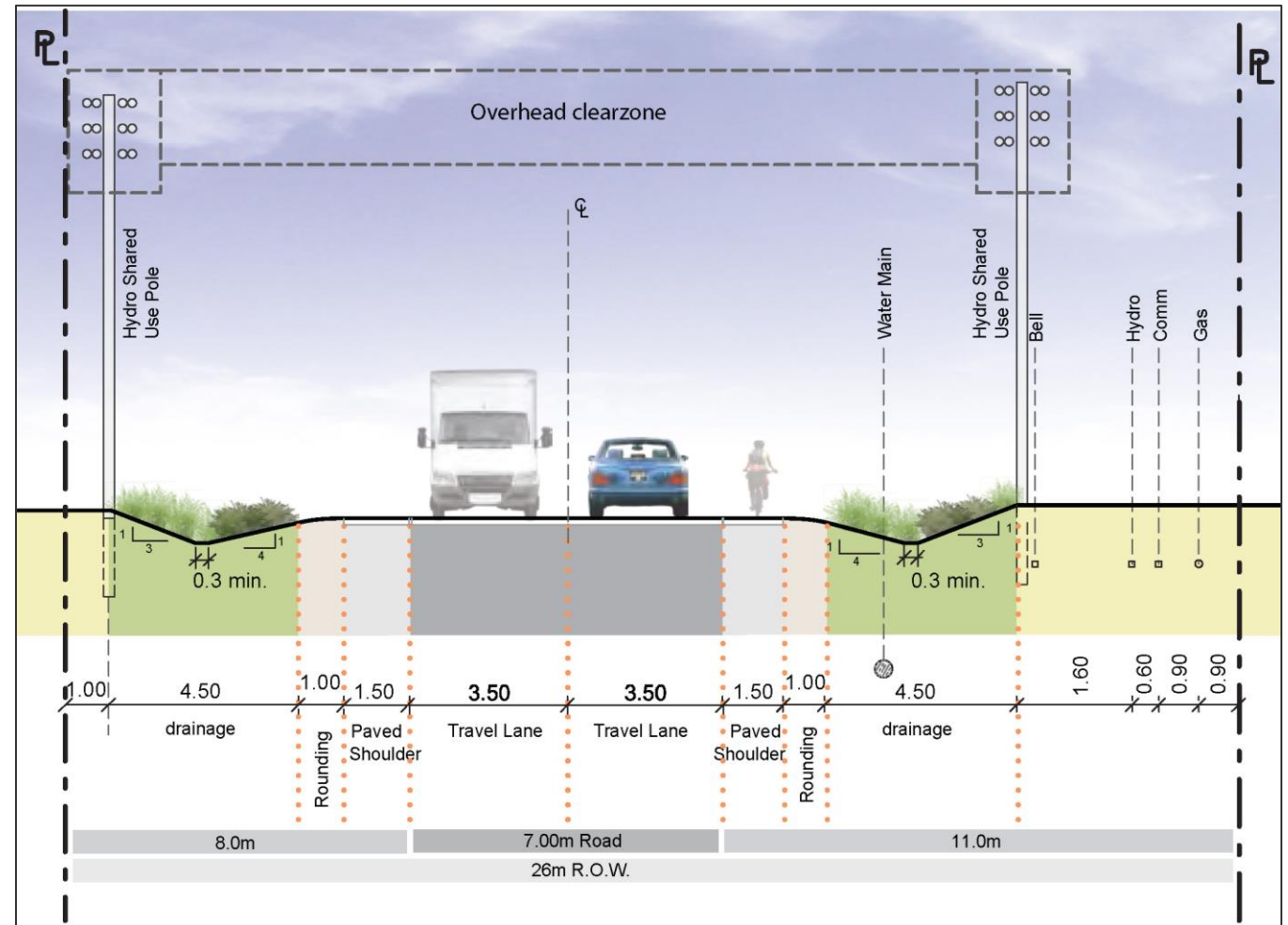
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Segment 1 – Possible Cross-section

Based on the Niagara Region's Complete Streets Design Guidelines (2017) a possible cross-section for this segment would include the following rural elements with a 26.0 metre right of way width:

- Two lanes of vehicle traffic
- Paved shoulder for bicyclists on each side of roadway*
- Possible sidewalk on one side

* Guidance in a new Complete Street Design Manual (currently underway) is to separate bicycle lanes from the vehicular traffic lanes.

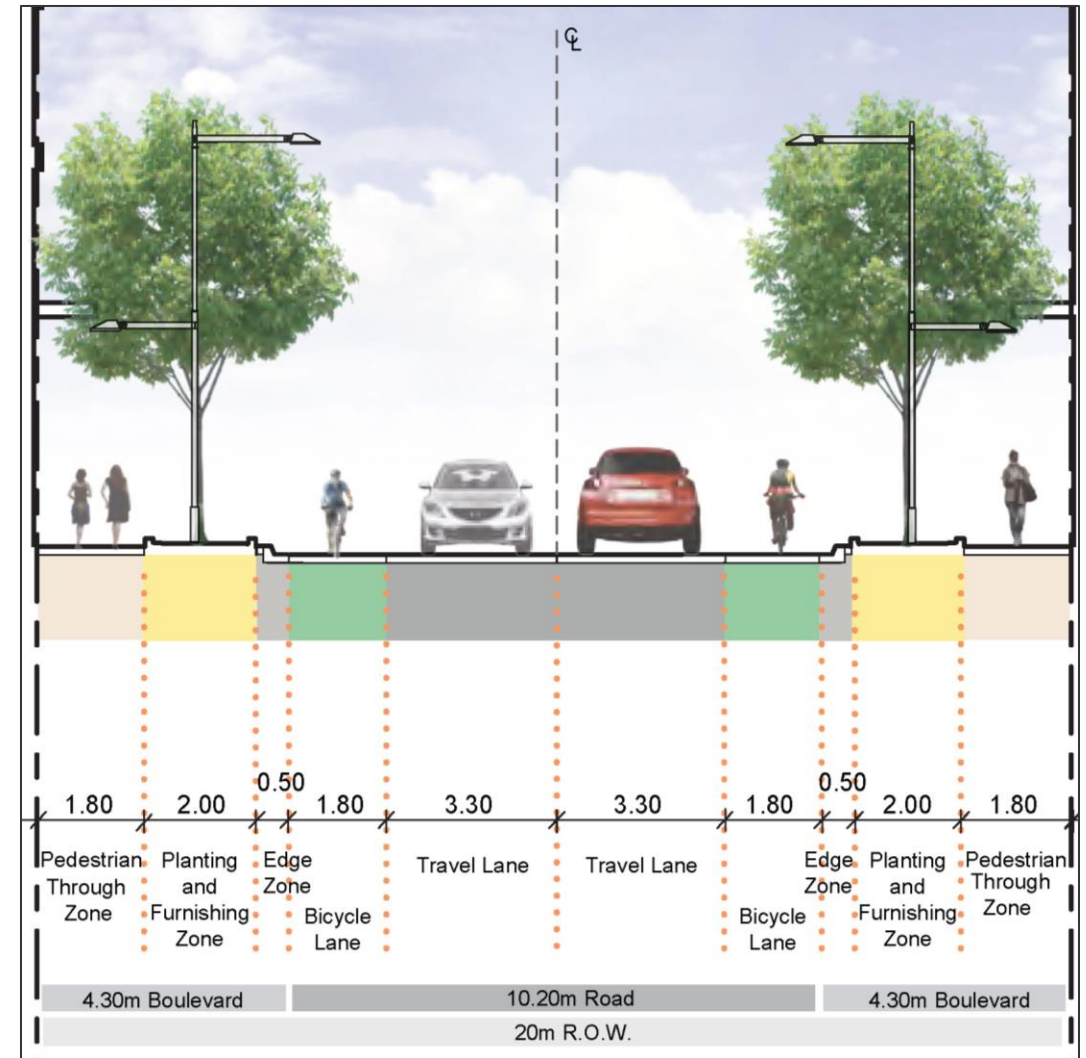


Segment 2 – Possible Cross-section

Based on the Niagara Region's Complete Streets Design Guidelines (2017) a possible cross-section for this segment would include the following Urban General (Narrow) elements with a 20.0 metre right of way width:

- Two lanes of vehicle traffic
- Bicycle lanes on each side of roadway*
- Separated pedestrian sidewalks on each side

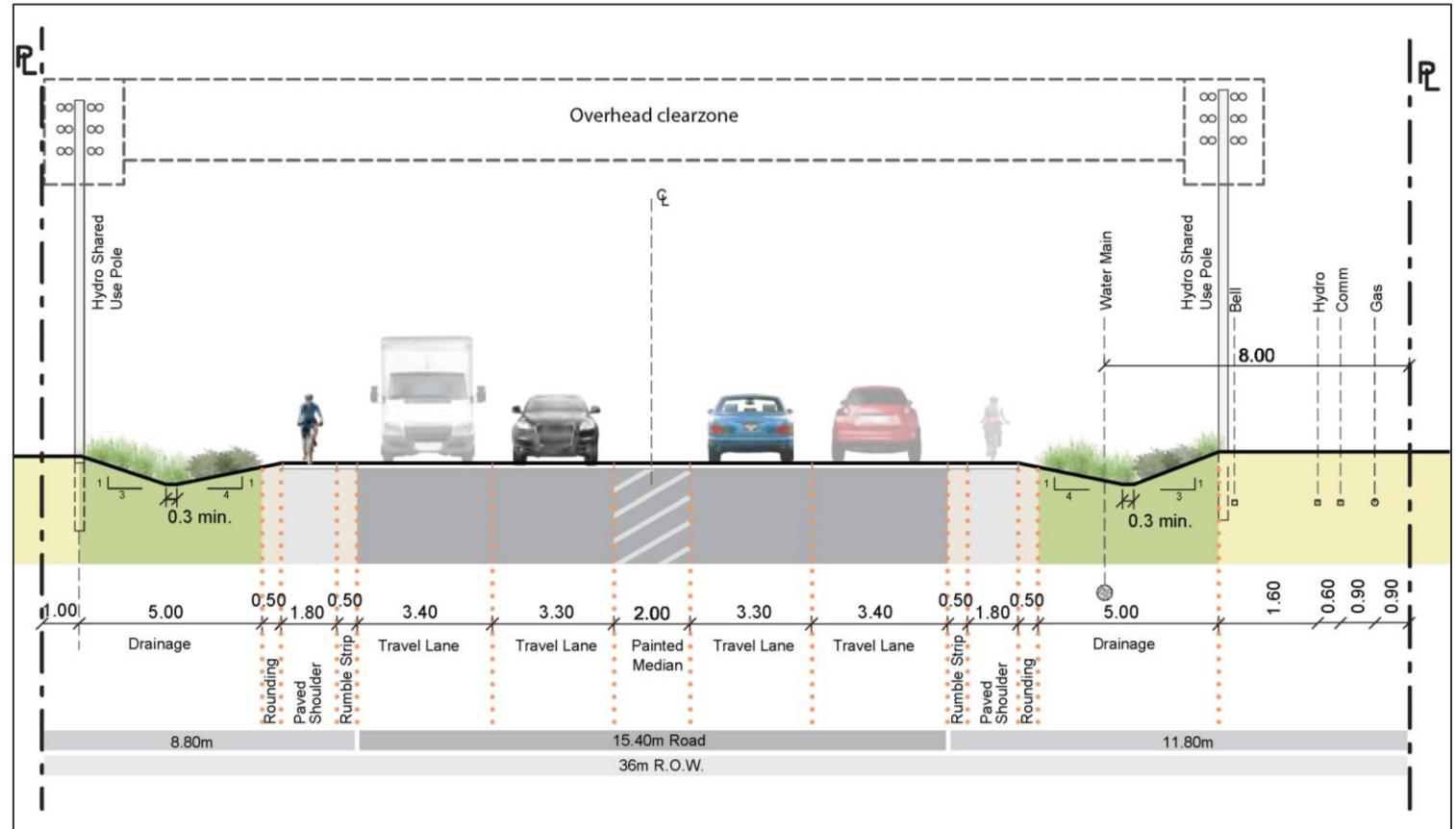
* Guidance in a new Complete Street Design Manual (currently underway) is to separate bicycle lanes from the vehicular traffic lanes.



Segment 3 – Possible Cross-section

Based on the Niagara Region's Complete Streets Design Guidelines (2017) a possible cross-section for this segment would include the following Rural elements with a 36.0 metre right of way width:

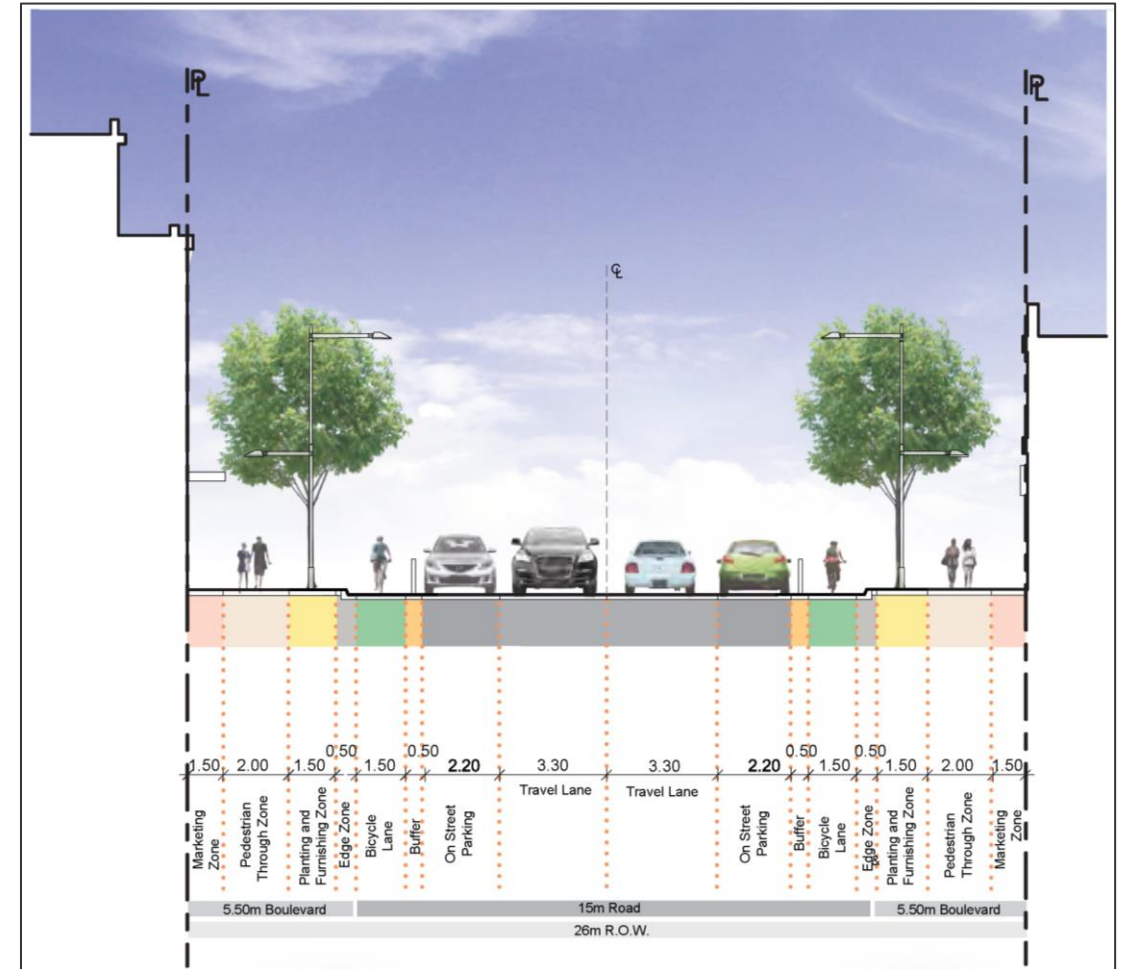
- Four lanes of vehicle traffic
- Painted median to act as barrier
- Rumble strips to separate paved shoulder from roadway
- Possible sidewalk on south side



Segment 4 – Possible Cross-section

Based on the Niagara Region's Complete Streets Design Guidelines (2017) a possible cross-section for this segment would include the following Main Street elements with a 26.0 metre right of way width:

- Four travel lanes proposed instead of two travel lanes with on-street parking
- Separated bicycle lanes on each side of roadway
- Separated sidewalks on each side of roadway



Getting involved in this study and next steps



Review presentation slides on the virtual consultation platform / project web page.



Submit any questions, comments or suggestions for consideration using the online comment form on the project webpage.



Request to be added to the Study Contact List to receive Study notices for future points of consultation.



Visit project website for updates:
<https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-37>



Attend future Public Information Centres



Following the Public Information Centre (PIC), the Study Team will complete the following:



Develop a PIC Summary to document results of this PIC.



Initiate studies to collect existing condition information for natural, socio-economic and cultural environment.



Develop and evaluate alternative solutions to identify a preliminary preferred solution



Host PIC #2 to present the evaluation of alternatives process and the preliminary preferred solution

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Questions?

Your feedback will be important to us. Your comments will be reviewed and considered, as the Study progresses. To submit questions/comments/suggestions, please use the online comment form available on the project webpage or contact one of the following Study Team Members:

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