

Corporate Report

REPORT NUMBER 169-2025-Infrastructure & Operations-Engineering	
DATE	
PREPARED May 12, 2025	FILE 0289.044
MEETING DATE July 14, 2025	
SUBJECT Northwest Arterial – Environmental Study Report Addendum	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This Report directly supports the ‘Safety and Well-being’ pillar of the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan by providing safe and accessible road designs.

It also aligns with the ‘Growth’ pillar by supporting the development of new housing supply options and encouraging urban intensification. Additionally, the report promotes walkable community through the introduction of new active transportation links.

This Report also supports the ‘Sustainability’ pillar of the plan by promoting environmentally friendly designs, such as green infrastructure into the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwest Arterial (NWA) was first proposed in the City’s 1987 Transportation Study to address road network and traffic issues in the northwest part of the City and to integrate the City’s traffic network with the Ministry of Transportation’s proposed Thunder Bay Expressway improvements. A Class Environmental Study Report (ESR) was completed in 1989, followed by an Addendum in 1992 to review specific concerns and new information. The recommendation from these studies was the NWA roadway with a preferred alignment connecting Golf Links Road to Dawson Road.

Significant time has passed since these reports were filed, and an updated Addendum is now required under the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process. This addendum is necessary to update the prior studies to reflect current planning, environmental conditions, land use, and community needs.

The updated Addendum confirms the original preferred alignment with several design improvements to enhance safety and support active transportation. Key updates include reduced speed limits, sidewalks, multi-use trails, and improved intersection spacing.

As required by the MCEA process, the Addendum Report is now ready to be filed with the City Clerk. It will be available for public review and comment for 30 days following the publication of the Notice of Addendum.

DISCUSSION

The Northwest Arterial (NWA) was first recommended in the City's 1987 Transportation Study to help address road network concerns in the northwest portion of the City and to integrate the City's traffic network with the Ministry of Transportation's proposed Thunder Bay Expressway improvements. A Class Environmental Study Report (ESR) was completed in 1989. This report outlined the planning process and established the NWA as the preferred alternative to address these issues. In 1992, an Addendum was issued to address specific areas of the original ESR that required further study and to consider new information before moving forward with the design. The conclusion of this Addendum maintained the original recommendation of the proposed NWA and preferred alignment.

A significant amount of time has lapsed without this project being implemented. As a result, another update (Addendum) to the original ESR is required. This update reviews the planning, design, and environmental conditions of the area and follows the process outlined in the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA).

The purpose of the Addendum is to review the preferred alignment of the NWA Road and update the study to reflect current environmental conditions and new legislation. The review included looking at:

- Natural and Cultural Heritage
- Ecology
- Adjacent Land uses
- Road Corridor and Geometrics
- Transportation
- Future Growth
- Stormwater Management
- Noise
- Climate Change and Air Quality
- Construction Staging

Public Consultation and Engagement

As part of the study, the City consulted with property owners, utilities, agencies, and Indigenous communities. A public open house was held in December 2024 to share information about the project and gather public input. Meetings were also conducted with adjacent community members and relevant agencies. In addition, members of Indigenous communities were consulted and involved in the field investigations of the study area. Following the public open house, presentation materials were made available on the City's Get Involved webpage for further public review and comment.

Preferred Solution

The preferred solution presented in the 1989 ESR and 1992 Addendum is still recommended, with some updates to improve safety of the roadway and promote active transportation (walking and cycling). The changes to the original NWA design are summarized below:

- Urban arterial cross-section
- Road right of way width of 30 to 40 metres
- Four travel lanes with curb and gutter
- Posted speed limits of 50 km/hr and 60 km/hr
- Sidewalk and Multi-use trail

The alignment of the NWA remained the same from the prior studies, with the exception of a change between Pioneer Drive and Paquette Road. A shift in the roadway alignment at this location was necessary to improve intersection spacing along the NWA to meet current design standards. See Attachment A for the recommended alignment.

The intersections at Pioneer Drive, Hutton Park Drive and John Street Road will have access to the NWA and be controlled using traffic signals, roundabouts, or stop signs. The final type of intersection control will be decided during the detailed design stage. There is also the opportunity for additional intersections to support new development and growth in the area. These growth areas are located between Pioneer Drive and Dawson Road, and between the McIntyre River and Highway 11 /17.

To ensure adequate spacing between intersections, the approaches of Piccard Avenue and Biloski Road will be closed to the NWA. As a result, a new secondary access road to the Cherry Ridge Subdivision is proposed under this project.

A new bridge across the McIntyre River is also required. The two options for the new bridge include a single-span or multi-span bridge. The final bridge design and profile will be further studied in the detail design phase.

Next Steps

As required by the MCEA process, the Addendum Report is now ready to be filed with the City Clerk. It will be available for public review and comment for 30 days following

the publication of the Notice of Addendum. A copy of the report will also be provided to City Council under separate cover. Following the 30-day public review period, all comments received will be reviewed and addressed. If necessary, clarifications or minor updates may be made to the Final Addendum Environmental Study Report. If no requests for an order under Section 16 of the Environmental Assessment Act are submitted, the project may proceed to implementation.

LINK TO EARTHCARE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

This Report aligns with the 2014-2020 EarthCare Sustainability Plan, which outlines the steps Thunder Bay must take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become a more resilient, sustainable community. The NWA roadway supports several objectives and actions including, growth, minimizing urban sprawl, active transportation, and protecting waterways.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

The construction of the NWA road and connection to the existing road network, including the future connection to the Thunder Bay Expressway (Highway 11/17), is to be completed in stages. The estimated costs for construction of the NWA is \$33,350,000.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the Addendum Report to the Environmental Study Report for the proposed NWA, located between Golf Links Road and Dawson Road, is complete and is to be filed with the City Clerk for public review, in accordance with the MCEA.

BACKGROUND

The 1987 City of Thunder Bay Transportation Study recommended consideration of a Northwest Arterial Roadway as a new corridor to connect Dawson Road (formerly Highway 102) and Golf Links Road.

At a Special Committee of the Whole Meeting on April 16, 1991 under Report 22/91 and Report 460/90 (Engineering), City Council approved the recommended route for the proposed Northwest Arterial alignment designated as A-1 and the Environmental Study Report.

December 6, 1999 Committee of the Whole Meeting under Report 1999.283 (Transportation and Works), City Council approved the Northwest Arterial Roadway be

included in the City's long term transportation plan, and that land acquisition for the required right-of-way proceed.

October 7, 2019 Committee of the Whole Meeting under Report 116/2019 (Infrastructure and Operations – Engineering and Operations), City Council approved the Transportation Master Plan which include the Northwest Arterial Roadway.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A – Northwest Arterial Roadway Plan

REPORT PREPARED BY

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REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kayla Dixon - Commissioner Infrastructure & Operations
07/07/2025 (MM/DD/YEAR)