

# Staff Report



Development Services Department

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**REPORT TO:** Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** March 25, 2024

**SUBMITTED BY:** Chris Spere, Director Engineering, 519-741-2200 ext. 7412

**PREPARED BY:** Niall Melanson, Project Manager, 519-741-2200 ext. 7133

**WARD INVOLVED:** Ward 5

**DATE OF REPORT:** February 20, 2024

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2024-104

**SUBJECT:** Class Environmental Assessment for Blair Creek Drive Extension

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## RECOMMENDATION:

That the Blair Creek Drive Extension Schedule 'B' Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report (PFR) prepared by MTE Consultants Inc., dated February 2024, which recommends Alternative 2 as the preferred solution, be received; and further,

That Blair Creek Drive Extension Schedule 'B' Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report (PFR) be filed with the Ministry of the Environment for the mandatory thirty (30) days review period as required by the Environmental Assessment (EA) Act.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to evaluate an alignment for the extension of Blair Creek Drive from future Strasburg Road to existing Reidel Drive.
- The key finding of this report is there were no significant features so a straight alignment was the preferred solution.
- The financial implications are the project is 100% funded with Development Charges, as follows: Detailed Design in 2025; Construction in 2026.
- Community engagement included a Public Information Centre held at the Doon Pioneer Park Community Centre on September 20, 2023, and the Region of Waterloo's Engage Page.
- Agency consultation included the MECP, Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Grand River Conservation Authority, Local Utilities, Local emergency Services and Grand River Transit.
- Aboriginal communities consultation included Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council and Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

**BACKGROUND:**

In support of the Blair Creek Drive extension, MTE Consultants Inc. completed a Project File Report for a Schedule 'B' Class Environmental Assessment.

A new City of Kitchener major community collector street is required to provide east-west access and connectivity within the planned new community of Dundee North in southwest Kitchener. The need for this road has been established and is supported by the City of Kitchener Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan. An extension of Blair Creek Drive between Reidel Drive and the future Strasburg Road will allow for multi-modal movement of people and goods between the internal road system and the surrounding area road network. The new road will support Kitchener's vision of cyclists and transit users alike. The Blair Creek Drive extension will include on-street parking, cycling facilities, sidewalks and trees to create a functional aesthetically pleasing streetscape for homes, schools and other properties located along the street.

The City of Kitchener's Transportation Master Plan (2013) and Official Plan (2014) includes the extension of Blair Creek Drive westerly to future Strasburg Road. The planned area road network supports local, Regional and Provincial objectives in growth and transportation for the surrounding communities in the Doon South and Brigadoon areas in Kitchener.

The study area is located within the Dundee North Growth Area as outlined in the Kitchener Growth Management Plan (2019) and is situated on current green field lands that are designated by the Official Plan as Urban. Initiatives related to this planned Growth Area that are currently ongoing include the development of the Dundee North Secondary Plan, which will outline detailed land use, and the design and construction the Strasburg Road Extension.

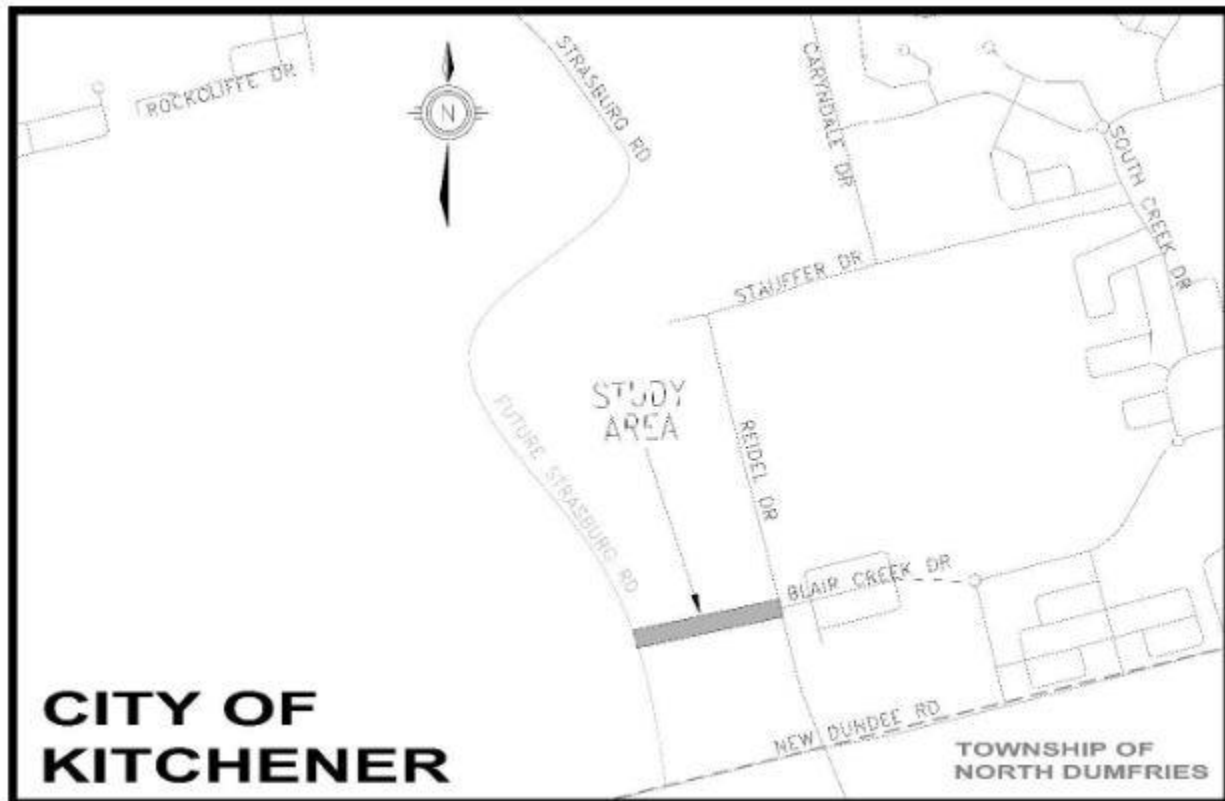


Figure 1. Blair Creek Drive Extension

The City's 2022 Development Charges (DC) Background Study identified that a Class EA study was required for the extension of Blair Creek Drive from future Strasburg Road to Reidel Drive. The extension was to include the road along with watermain and associated storm sewers. The DC Background Study also identified that a sanitary sewer could be included in the extension pending the outcome of the EA.

## **REPORT:**

A range of options were developed to address the problem statement. Each alternative runs in a straight east-west alignment from the point of intersection of the existing / planned Blair Creek Drive east for Reidel Drive. Four (4) alternatives were considered for the Blair Creek Drive Extension as follows:

### **Alternative One: 24.8m right-of-way**

The first alternative is a two-lane road with a 24.8m right-of-way. This cross-section matches the existing cross-section of Blair Creek Drive east of Reidel Drive. The overall width of the asphalt is 14.8m from the front of curb. The driving lanes are 3.5m wide, with 1.5m bike lanes and 2.4m parking lanes along both sides of the road. The boulevards are 3.2m wide and the sidewalks are 1.5m wide.

### **Alternative Two: 26.0m right-of-way with Cycle Tracks (Preferred)**

The second alternative is a two-lane road with a 26.0m right-of-way. This cross-section matches the preferred cross-section for a major collector street as outlined in the City of Kitchener's Complete Streets Guidelines. The overall width of the asphalt is 9m from the front of curb. The driving lanes are 3.3m wide with a 2.4m wide parking lane on one side only. The boulevards are 4m wide and the cycle tracks are set back from the road within the boulevard. The cycle tracks are 1.6m wide and the sidewalks are 1.8m wide on both sides. There is a 0.2m buffer to separate the cyclists and pedestrians.

### **Alternative Three: 26.0m right-of-way with Bike Lanes**

The third alternative is a two-lane road with a 26.0m right-of-way. This cross-section matches the alternative cross-section for a major collector street as outlined in the City of Kitchener's Complete Streets Guidelines. The overall width of the asphalt is 14.6m from the front of curb. The driving lanes are 3.3m wide with a 2.4m parking lane on one side only. There are 2.4m wide bike lanes on each side of the road, with a 0.4m safety buffer between the bike lanes and the driving or parking lane. The boulevards are 3.1m wide and the sidewalks are 1.8m wide.

### **Alternative Four: Do nothing**

The "Do Nothing" alternative must always be evaluated as part of the Environmental Class Assessment process and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages assuming the project is stopped completely and does not progress any further.

## **Evaluation of Alternative Solutions**

The initial evaluation of the alternatives was completed prior to the Public Information Centre so that the alternatives as well as the preferred solution could be presented to the public. An evaluation matrix was developed to evaluate and score each option according to the following criteria:

- Natural Environment
- Social/Cultural Environment
- Heritage/Archaeological Environment

- Disruption to Existing or Future Land Uses
- Technical/City Standards
- Costs
- Climate Change

Each alternative was rated based on its ability to meet each criterion using a poor to good. A detailed evaluation matrix was completed with input from various City departments. A summary of the evaluation, the main advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, as well as the preferred alternative were presented at the Public Information Centre.

Evaluation Criteria	Alternative 1: 24.8m ROW	Alternative 2: 26m ROW + Cycle Track	Alternative 3: 26m ROW + Bike Lane	Do Nothing
Natural Environment				
Social/Cultural Environment				
Heritage/Archaeological Environment				
Property Impacts				
Technical/City Standards				
Costs				
Climate Change				
Preferred				

**Figure 2.0 – Evaluation Matrix Summary of Design Alternatives**

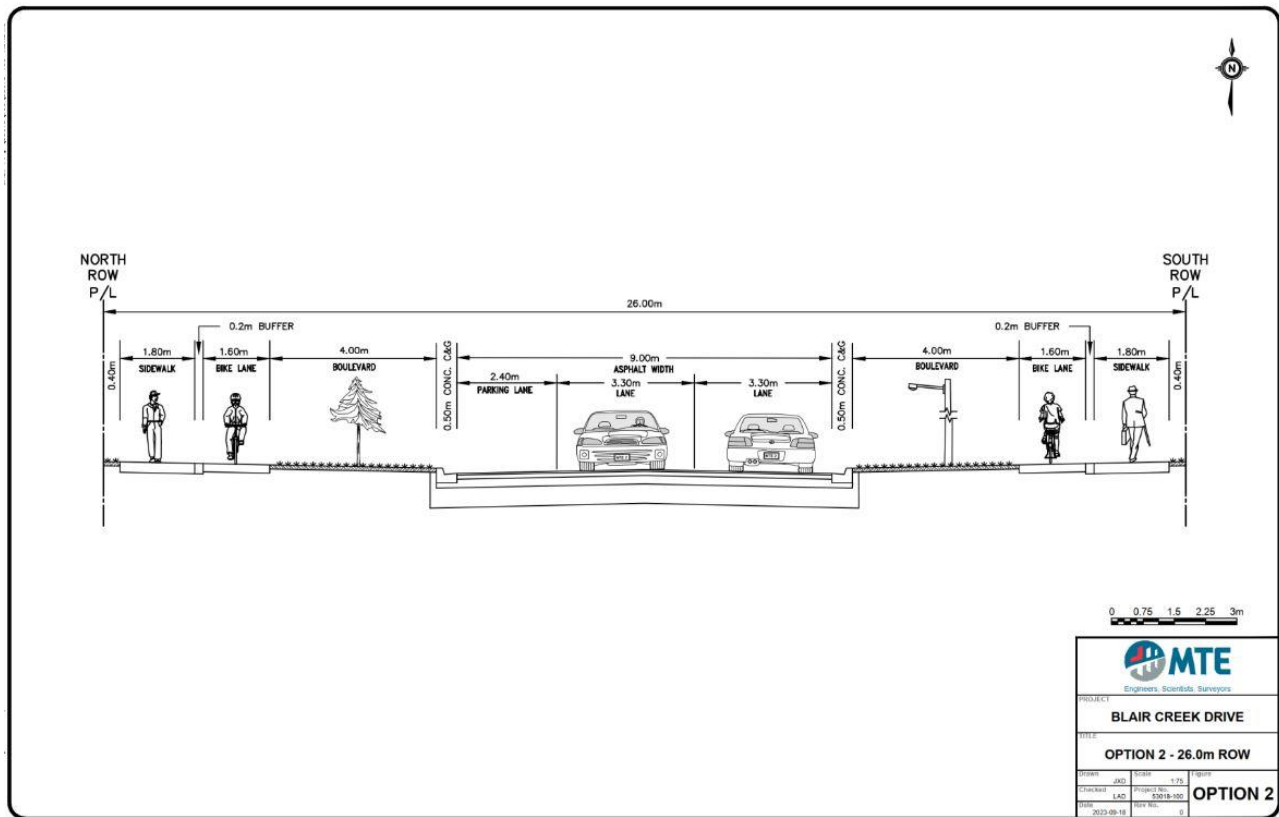
### Preferred Alternative

Based on the results of the evaluation, Alternative 2, with a 26.0m right-of-way and cycle tracks is preferred as it has the least negative impacts, fully addresses the problems, and takes advantage of the opportunities.

- A straight road alignment has no significant negative impacts to the surrounding environment, and
- establishes the east-west collector road as intended through past planning processes, enhancing the overall transportation network and supporting future community growth and development.

Given the lack of significant natural features, a wider right-of-way was chosen to provide the ideal cross-section as per the City of Kitchener’s Complete Streets guidelines. The Preferred Alternative cross-section provides a continuation of a safe, “all ages and abilities” cycling network with the cycle tracks grade-separated from the driving and parking lanes. Wide, 1.8m sidewalks are AODA compliant, and large boulevards provide

ample opportunity for future tree planting, streetscaping, low-impact development features and winter snow storage, which all contribute to a high-quality pedestrian environment. Alternative 2 allows for a variety of transportation choices which will support the new Dundee North community and the surrounding existing neighbourhoods. Storm and watermain will follow a direct alignment in accordance with standard City of Kitchener cross-sections.



**Figure 3.0 - Alternative 2 - 26.0m ROW with Cycle Track**

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports **the delivery of core services.**

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget. Funds are currently available from Development Charges.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

**INFORM**

From the outset of this study, public involvement was recognized as being important to the overall success of the assignment. A formal Notice of Study Commencement was published in The Kitchener Record on April 28, 2023, to advise the Public of the Class EA process and provide notification that the EA study for the Blair Creek Drive extension was to proceed. In addition to the newspaper advertisement, the Notice of Commencement was mailed to residences within the project area and non-resident property owners/developers. Stakeholders and agencies were emailed a copy on the same date. A project page was

established on the Region of Waterloo's Engage (EngageWR) website where copies of all notices and other project information were posted online.

## **CONSULT**

A Public Information Centre (PIC) was hosted on September 20, 2023, in person at the Doon Pioneer Park Community Centre. The public was able to view the display boards, speak with the Project Team, and provide feedback through comment sheets or the Engage website. The display boards featured the purpose of the project, the problem/opportunity statement, an overview of the study area and the studies being completed, the design alternatives, design criteria, evaluation matrix and the preferred alternative. The PIC boards were posted online on the EngageWR project page the next day. Comment sheets were available but no written feedback was received after the PIC. One email from a member of the public was received after the PIC which expressed support for the preferred alternative, along with other comments unrelated to the scope of this project. The email was addressed by the Project Team.

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council were provided the Notice of Commencement, the notification of PIC, and the PIC documents via email by MTE Consultants Inc. Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council responded to the Notice of Commencement and the notification of PIC. They requested clarification of the project area which MTE provided. No other comments have been received as of the time of writing of this report. It was noted that archaeological work is not being completed as part of this study, as this area has been covered by recent Stage 1 and Stage 2 investigations by Stantec.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) was provided the Notice of Commencement and the notification of PIC via email by MTE Consultants Inc. The MECP responded with a letter of acknowledgement. The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) was provided the Notice of Commencement and the notification of PIC via email by MTE Consultants Inc.

## **PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:**

There are no previous reports/authorities related to this matter.

**APPROVED BY:** Justin Readman, General Manager, DSD

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – Blair Creek Drive Extension, Schedule 'B' Class Environmental Assessment Project File Report.