



Norfolk County
Environmental and Infrastructure Services
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May 27, 2024

To: Members of the Long Point Ratepayers' Association

Attention: Long Point Causeway Road Resurfacing Project

Dear Members:

The intent of this letter is to provide background information and a project update related to the Long Point Causeway Road Resurfacing Project.

1.0 Background

In July 2019, Norfolk County completed a Schedule C Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) for the Rehabilitation of the Long Point Causeway from Lakeshore Road to Erie Boulevard, including the replacement of the Long Point Causeway Bridge, to address deteriorating conditions and transportation needs along the corridor. An Environmental Study Report (ESR) was prepared to document the proposed design and MCEA process.

The Project proceeded to implementation in two (2) phases:

- Phase 1: Detailed design and construction for the replacement of the Long Point Causeway Bridge over Big Creek. Construction was completed in December 2022.
- Phase 2: Detailed design and reconstruction of the Long Point Causeway, from Lakeshore Road to Erie Boulevard (north and south of the Phase 1 works to Lakeshore Road and Erie Boulevard, respectively).

Due to the constrained causeway corridor, the environmentally sensitive nature of the project location, and the challenges in obtaining provincial and federal permits, the road cross-section that was identified as the Preferred Design Concept in the ESR was revised within the Phase 2 limits to reduce environmental impacts through a reduction of the roadway footprint and grading.

An ESR Addendum was prepared to capture the proposed revisions to the roadway design, existing conditions, impacts and mitigation measures, and ensure that

consultation was completed. The ESR Addendum was posted in January 2024 for public, agency, and Indigenous Nation review in accordance with the MCEA.

2.0 EA Addendum

This communication serves to provide an update on the Long Point Causeway Project, Phase 2, in particular details on the proposed reconstructed roadway platform and the allocation of road space within it. The objective of this roadway improvement project to:

1. Address the poor roadway conditions along the Causeway
2. Achieve improved safety for all users respecting the limited space provided by the uniqueness of this right of way
3. Introduce measures that temper operating speeds in-line with the posted speed limit (50km/hour)
4. Integrate Norfolk's active and on-going road-side tree management initiatives as part of this project.
5. Minimize the interaction between area wildlife and roadway users

The Long Point Causeway is a unique roadway within Norfolk County as it is located within the buffer zone for the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve and forms the easterly edge of the Big Creek National Wildlife Area and the westerly edge of the Long Point Inner Bay. Its immediate surrounding lands are of significant importance to the wildlife living in these areas, and geotechnically challenging given the marshland on the west and the inner bay on the east. These situational features and conditions pose significant barriers to any contemplated expansion of the roadway platform. Attachment A (Figure 1) portrays the current road platform conditions.

The original Environmental Assessment (*EA*) recommendation for the Causeway (beyond the bridge reconstruction area), indicated that the roadway could be widened in an effort to provide wider travel lanes (2 x 3.5m), a paved shoulder (1.5m each side) and gravel shoulders (1.0m each side). To deliver this proposed road, construction into the Long Point Marsh land area would be required. Approval agencies would not support such an intrusion into the marshlands. Furthermore, the additional cost to deliver such an expanded roadway into the marshland area was significant and in the order of \$11M. A pictorial of the initial proposed improved platform proposal and its conflicts with the marshland is shown in Attachment A (Figure 2).

In March of 2023, staff presented report EIS-23-009 to Council outlining proposed changes to the original *EA* proposal to which was intended to negate any intrusion into the marshland area and avoid significant additional construction costs. The March 2023 report secured Council's approval to proceed with an Addendum to the *EA* allowing for the consideration of a modified roadway platform. The report indicated that wider 'shared' travel lanes (2x4.0m) could be provided along with 'additional cycling/pedestrian space along the edge of the road'. This proposal would have introduced wider travel lanes (beyond that in place today) that would see motorists and cyclists share lane space. The inference to additional roadside space for others such as pedestrians and cyclists who may wish to cycle outside the shared space was not

dimensioned at that time. A pictorial of this revised road section is shown on Attachment A (Figure 3).

Since the writing of the March report, and in preparation for the issuance of an Addendum to the EA, staff along with its consultant progressed the detailed design based on the suggestion above. Through the detailed field work it became evident that in delivering two 4m wide lanes, the additional space beyond the white edge line would vary from 0m to 0.75m in width. The 0m limitation is not isolated to a small section but rather 50% of the road length would have this 0m space while the balance could provide 0.75m. This would not be an ideal situation.

This finding necessitated a further examination of how to best improve the roadway within the constrained work zone and still deliver upon the objectives for the Causeway. The result was a modified road section that continues to work within the constrained work zone and deliver travel lanes reflective of the current lane width in place today and an improved variable roadside paved shoulder ranging from 0.75m to 1.25m with white lines separating these areas. The area outside the 3.25m travel lanes is insufficient to be delineated as dedicated cycling space however the additional space provides an improvement for those that cycle the Causeway. Travel lanes of 3.25m provide a reasonable minimum travel space for motorists which, in being of minimum width, tends to temper operating speeds. This revised roadway section shown on Attachment A (Figure 4) was presented to the public through the EA Addendum process and received predominantly positive feedback.

3.0 Roadside Tree Removals and Replanting

Willows and Eastern cottonwood trees were planted along the Causeway when it was created in the 1920s. Although not usually viewed as an ideal roadside tree, these willows and cottonwoods have been maintained over the years in effort to retain their aesthetic value provided to the surrounding area. These trees have been and continue to be the subject of the active tree management program along this section road which is being delivered by the County's Forestry Division. Most of the trees have been in a steady state of decline in recent years resulting in increased maintenance requirements. Over 70 trees have required removal between 2018 and 2021 as part of the ongoing management of these roadside trees. The most recent assessment had indicated many of the trees present an unacceptable level of risk to road users. The early 2024 tree removal program was coordinated with the roadway improvement project to ensure the two (2) separate projects did not overlap with each other. A total of 109 trees were removed and 22 trees were pruned through the roadside tree management program. The County is committed to re-introducing appropriate roadside trees along the Causeway respecting that their presence carries notable value from a scenery and wildlife support (no dependency) point of view. To that end, the County (through its Forestry Division) has initiated a tree replacement program as part of its active and ongoing roadside tree management program along this stretch of road. Notification for the replacement program came out this spring to areas residents. The County is committed, in partnership with the Long Point Ratepayers' Association, to complete a landscaping program that will include approved species at suitable planting locations along the Causeway. In addition to replanting areas along the Causeway, the County

has considered additional locations in the surrounding area. Replantings will consist of trees, shrubs, and grasses. Replanting started this spring (2024) and will continue into 2025.

4.0 Roadside Parking

The Long Point Causeway in its present and proposed future state does not provide sufficient space for roadside parking. Staff are considering the installation of gateway signs as motorists enter the north/south stretch of the Long Point Causeway – advising motorists that roadside parking is prohibited along the Causeway. A gateway sign may be preferred over the placement of numerous traditional roadside no parking/no stopping signs as the presence of several repeating signs (while perhaps more effective) would most likely be seen as unattractive for this area. We would also suggest the placement of a supplementary sign indicating the presence and location of the Long Point Birding Trail and Viewing Platform to guide nature watchers to this most appropriate viewing area. While we do anticipate that some users may well still attempt to park and view from the roadside, the messaging proposed on the gateway sign will assist in changing some behaviors along this stretch roadway. Sample road signage can be found on Attachment B. Staff propose to monitor the behaviour of road users post construction and if necessary, traditional no parking/no stopping signs could be installed to reinforce the desired behaviour and to improve enforceability.

5.0 Wildlife Protection

The Long Point Causeway project includes the installation of wildlife exclusionary fencing along the edge of the Causeway (nearer to the water edge) which will serve to guide amphibious wildlife to the crossing corridors installed in the roadway under an earlier cooperative project with Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), a division of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). The exclusionary fencing serves to minimize crossing conflicts between wildlife and motorists, providing a safer environment for both wildlife and motorists.

6.0 Construction Timelines

It is anticipated that the Causeway resurfacing project will be released for public tendering in June, 2024. Construction will not be permitted to commence until after the September Labour Day weekend, in order to minimize any impacts to residents and tourists to the area, as well as avoid the turtle nesting season. The wildlife protection fencing will follow after the road resurfacing project and may be carried out in phases based on budgetary constraints as well as the ability for CWS/ECCC to secure funding. The installation of the wildlife protection fence is currently planned to be completed in the late fall of 2024, however, may bridge into the 2025 construction season. During construction activities, the Causeway will be reduced to one lane, with a rolling (moving) operation. The delays will be relatively minor and not similar to what was experienced during the construction of the bridge.

County staff look forward to meeting with your group to present the project, answer questions and provide additional details through presentation boards, drawings and discussion.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jacob Columbus', written in a cursive style.

Jacob Columbus, C.E.T.
Project Manager, Engineering
jacob.columbus@norfolkcounty.ca

Attachments:

1. Attachment A – Cross Sections
2. Attachment B – Sample Road Signage

EXISTING CONDITION

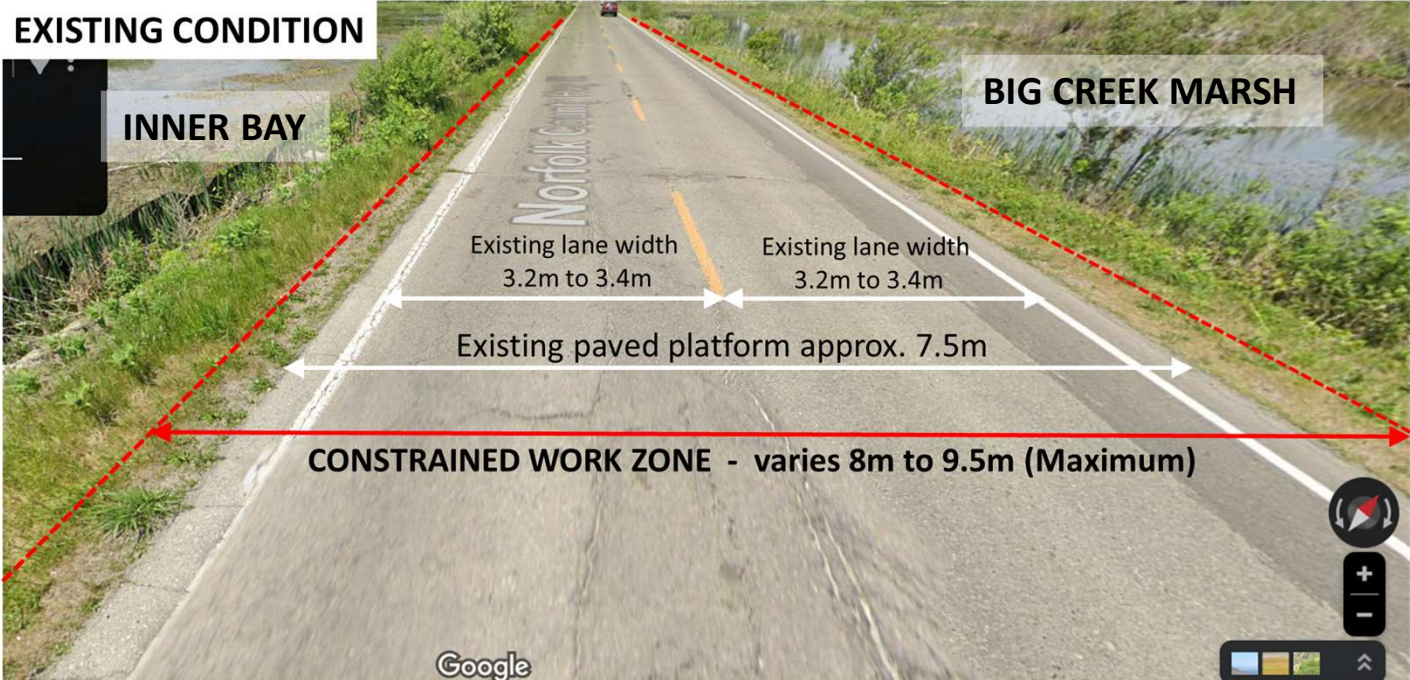


Figure 1 – Existing conditions/constraints

ORIGINAL EA PROPOSAL

Proposed work requires construction INTO the Long Point Marsh Lands (NOT SUPPORTED BY APPROVAL AGENCIES)

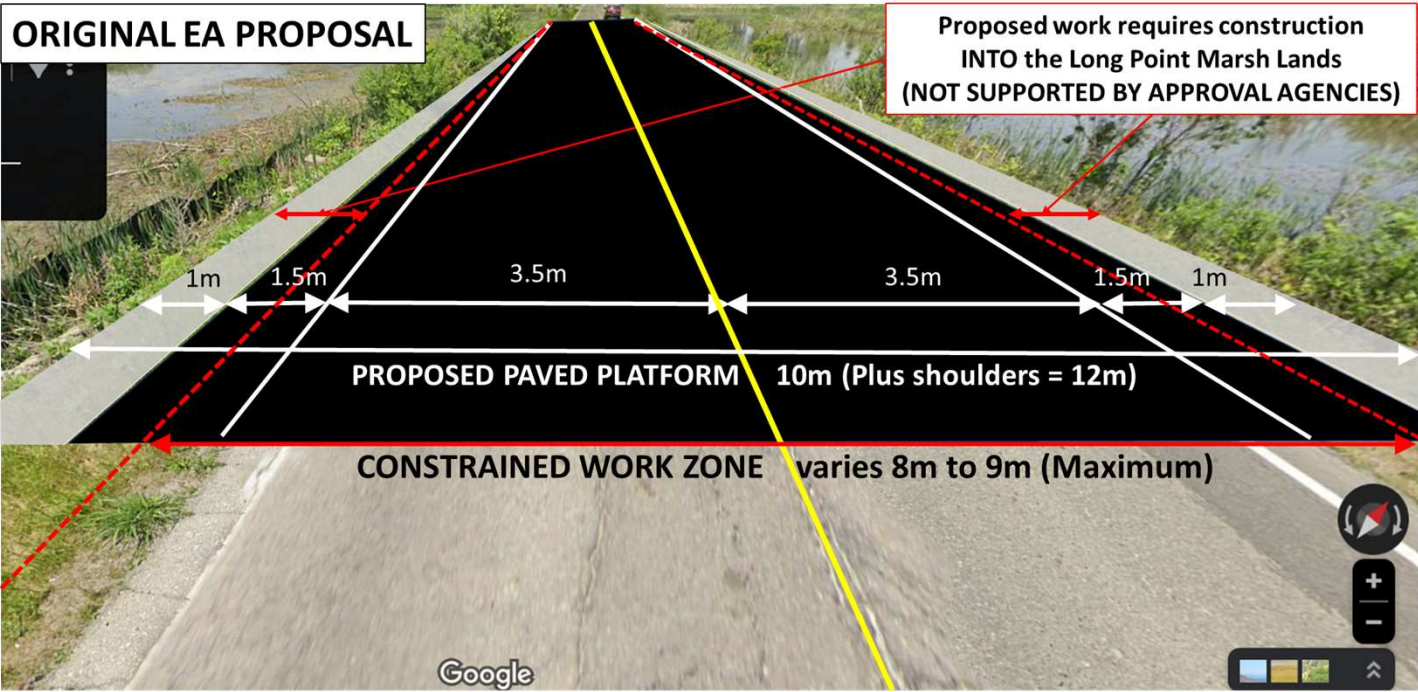


Figure 2 – Original EA Proposed Road Platform

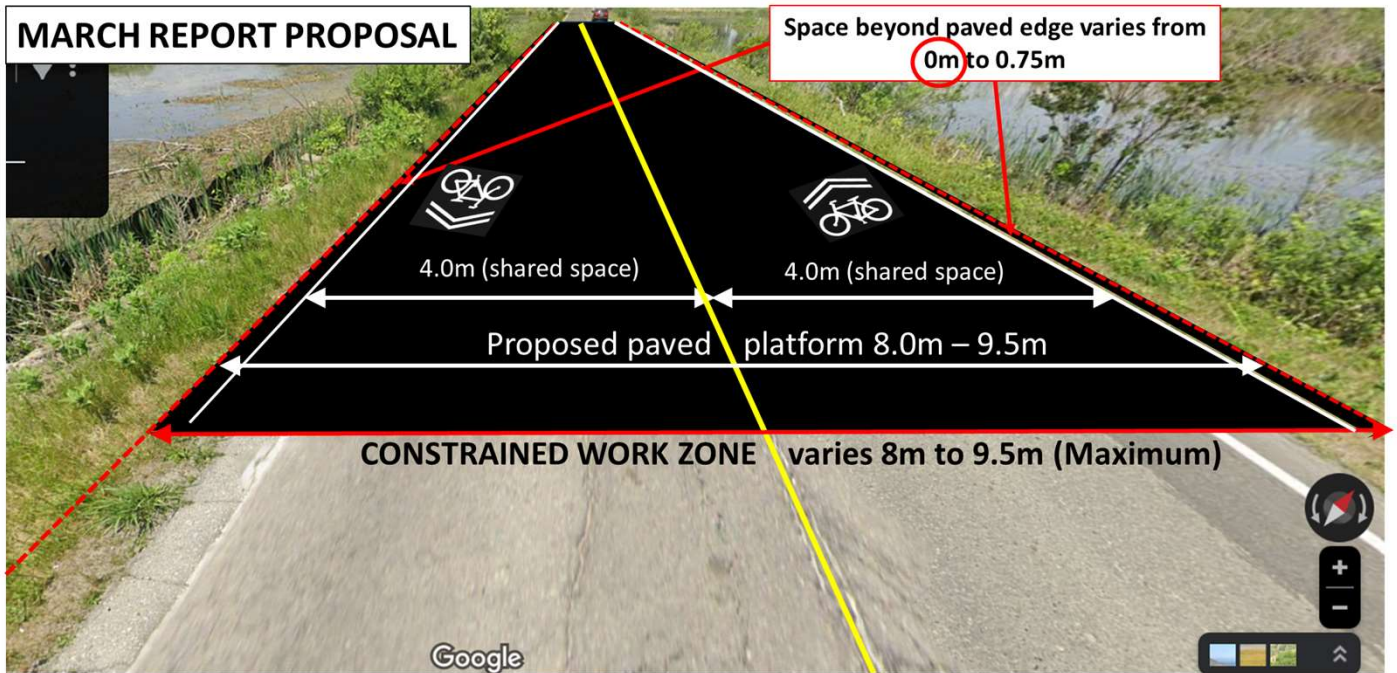


Figure 3 – March 2023 Proposed Road Platform

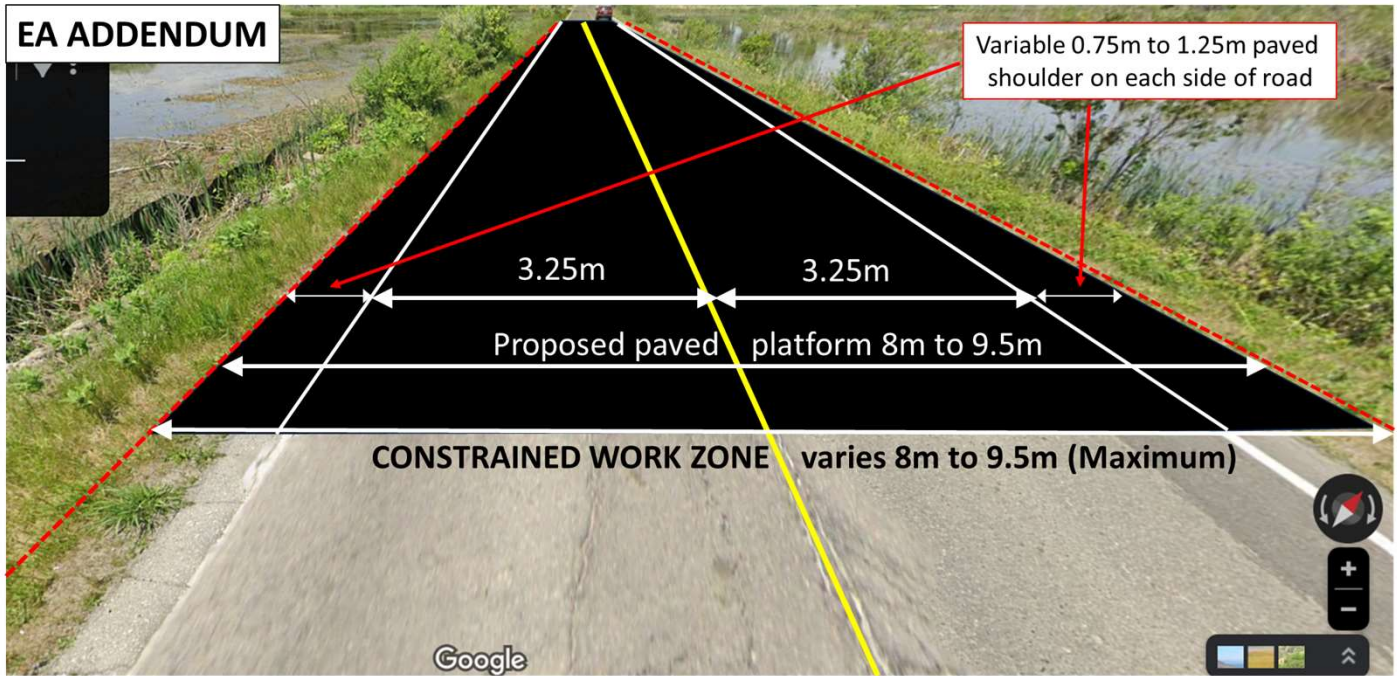


Figure 4 – Revised Road Platform as presented in EA Addendum

Attachment B: Sample Road Signage

**ROAD-SIDE PARKING IS PROHIBITED
ALONG THE CAUSEWAY**

**LONG POINT BRIDING TRAIL and
VIEWING PLATFORM
1.7km Ahead**