

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Planning Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	January 13, 2015
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Synergies between Infrastructure Development and New School Openings (PED15006) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Jason Thorne General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

The Planning Committee at its meeting on May 22, 2013 directed staff to report back on the following:

- (a) An investigation that assesses the contributing factors that create a lack of synergy and coordination between the development of City infrastructure and the opening of new schools;
- (b) A proposed plan of action to prevent future scenarios where a school opens without adequate City infrastructure in place;
- (c) That a copy of the motion be forwarded to the Joint City of Hamilton School Board Liaison Committee for information.

## Information:

There has been a growing concern that sidewalk infrastructure be in place prior to opening of new schools. Making the environment conducive to walking will encourage children to walk or bicycle to school, and will decrease in automobile reliance as a transportation mode to school.

The School Boards along with the City, Metrolinx, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation participated in a forum in May 2012 to discuss a joint report entitled "School Siting and Site Design for a Healthy Community". This forum explored policies, guidelines, and processes to encourage a more collaborative approach in the design and locational

requirements for schools to support an active and sustainable transportation plan. This plan would promote walking and biking as the preferred mode of transportation to foster a healthier community.

In the last five years, seven new schools were constructed and five existing schools were re-built. The construction of new schools can be divided into two categories each with their own unique challenges; new schools in developing subdivisions and new re-built schools in established neighbourhoods. Several of these sites did not have sufficient sidewalks in place to encourage students to walk to school.

One of the challenges in new subdivisions is the need to construct schools before the sidewalks leading to the schools are built. However, developers do not normally construct sidewalks in advance of new home construction in order to avoid damaging the sidewalks during construction. Moreover, school sites are typically located in the centre of neighbourhoods, whereas residential developments proceed in a more sequential pattern starting from the outer perimeter and proceeding inward. As a result, poor sidewalk connectivity to schools situated on sites interior to the neighbourhood may exist during the construction of early subdivision phases.

Within established neighbourhoods, it is necessary to have a continuous sidewalk which leads to pedestrian crosswalks and signalized intersections. To provide for this, the City must plan for and prioritize capital infrastructure projects so that proper sidewalk linkages are constructed to support an active and safe walking / cycling route to schools.

City staff met with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board staff on April 24, 2014 to discuss concerns about lack of synergies and coordination of sidewalks and the opening of new schools. The meeting resulted in a general consensus that the School Boards and City are working together to encourage and support children and their families to choose active transportation to and from school. When a planning application is received for a new school, it is critical that school travel plans including a pedestrian access plan be included as part of the School Board's submission to the City. Sidewalk infrastructure and connection requirements need to be clearly identified and evaluated during preliminary discussions. At the conclusion of this meeting, the following next steps were identified:

- Continued dialogue on issues with new school projects at the Joint City of Hamilton School Board Liaison Committee;
- School Boards will develop school travel plans including a pedestrian access plan as part of their site plan submission for new school sites. The plan will promote active and safe routes to schools, and it will assist the City in the identification of missing sidewalk linkages; and,

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- List of School Boards' priority of new school sites should be circulated to the City on a regular basis.

That the item on the Outstanding Business List with respect to synergies between infrastructure development and new school openings be noted as complete and removed from the Outstanding Business List.

JS/SYL/mh