

Highway 17 Four-Laning between the Manitoba / Ontario Border and Kenora – Section 2

Route Planning and Preliminary Design Study,
between Highway 673 and Rush Bay Road

G.W.P. 6053-03-00

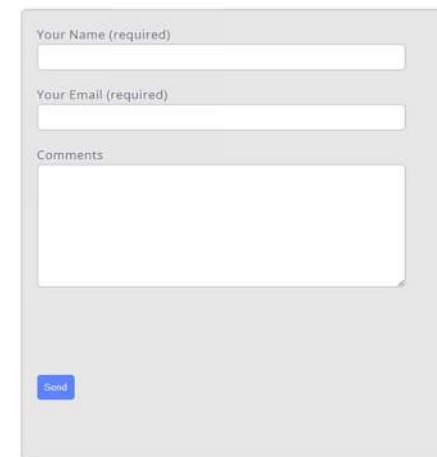
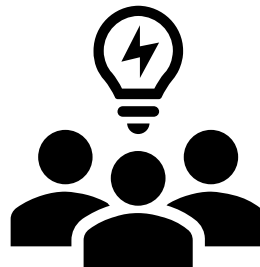
July 4, 2024



We welcome any comments and questions you may have on the material presented. Please send in your comments to the Team by **August 5, 2024.**

After reviewing the displays, please complete a comment sheet or speak to one of the Project Team members to discuss any questions or comments you may have. You may also submit input using our website:

www.4lanehighway17kenora.ca



Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policy:

Information collected during this study will be used to assist the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) in meeting the requirements of the Provincial *Environmental Assessment Act*. This material will be maintained on file for use during the study and may be included in the study documentation. Information collected will be used in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

Welcome to Public Information Centre (PIC) #2 for Section 2 of the Route Planning and Preliminary Design Study for the Highway 17 Four-Laning between Highway 673 and Rush Bay Road. **The purpose of this PIC is to present and seek input on the evaluation of alternatives and on the preferred alternative.**

In 2009, a preferred alternative for Section 2 was selected, documented and filed in a Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR). During the TERS's 30-day review period, concerns were received and MTO decided to put the Study on hold until a resolution was reached. The previous preferred alternative (shown below) was not carried forward for further evaluation as it had significant impacts and a Part II Order was issued.

In 2018, MTO placed a priority on the Highway 17 Four-Laning between the Manitoba / Ontario Border. The planning, preliminary design, environmental assessment and detail design phases for Section 1 were completed in 2019 and documented in a TERS. **The Class EA for Section 2 is now undergoing completion. The evaluation of the alternatives and presentation of the preferred alternative is being presented as a part of PIC #2.**



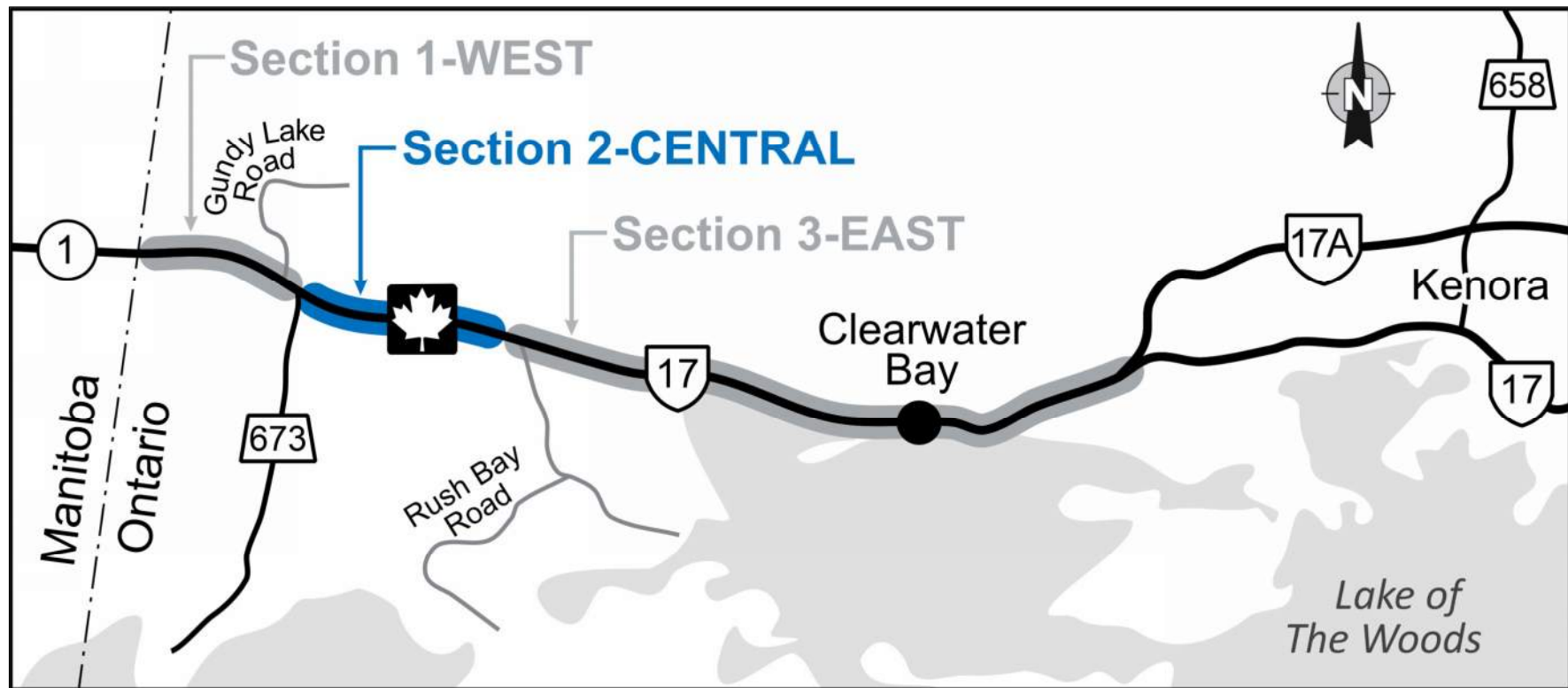
If you have any accessibility requirements to participate in this project, please speak to one of the Project Team members.



Reminder: please sign it at the front desk.



The planning for the Four-Laning of Highway 17 is being carried out in 3 sections:



Section #1:
Environmental Assessment (EA)
complete, under construction
 Manitoba border to Highway 673
 (6.5 kilometres)

Section #2:
EA undergoing re-evaluation
 Highway 673 to Rush Bay Road (8.5
 kilometres)

Section #3:
Re-evaluation required, timing
to be determined
 Rush Bay Road to Highway 17A
 (24 kilometres)

- Highway 17 between the Manitoba-Ontario border and Kenora is a strategic link in the Trans-Canada Highway System.
- The need for improved transportation opportunities was determined, and four-laning was brought forward to improve safety, reduce travel times and relieve traffic congestion.
- There are no alternate highway routes between the Manitoba-Ontario border and Kenora for inter-provincial traffic. Four-Laning will provide an opportunity for redundancy of travel lanes if one direction is closed.
- Long distance traffic relies on this section of highway to bring goods and trade to the region and across Canada.
- Traffic volumes increase significantly during summer months, particularly during long weekends.
- The purpose of the study is to review the route opportunities, evaluate the potential impacts and improvements and select the preferred route.



Four-Laning Highway 17 will improve road safety by:

- ✓ providing increased opportunities for passing
- ✓ physically separating opposing lanes of traffic
- ✓ reducing congestion
- ✓ reducing travel time
- ✓ minimizing impacts to traffic during maintenance activities

2009 – The study was initiated. Existing conditions were documented, alternatives were developed and evaluated and a preferred alternative was selected for Sections 1 and 2.

Transportation Environmental Study Reports (TESRs) were filed for Sections 1 and 2. During the 30-day comment period, concerns were received, and MTO decided to put the Study on hold until a resolution was reached.

2018 – MTO recommenced the study and continues to work with stakeholders allowing the project to move forward. As part of the study re-commencement, MTO withdrew the previously issued Notice of Completion for each of Sections 1 and 2.

2021 – A Notice of Completion of TESR was re-filed for Section 1 to document the Recommended Plan, alternatives development and evaluation/selection and the design implementation details (including the environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures).

2022 – The Section 1 Detail Design was completed and is currently under construction (anticipated completion in 2024).

2023 – Section 2 began undergoing re-evaluation. PIC #1 took place in September 2023.

2024 – Evaluation of alternatives has been completed. PIC #2 took place today, July 4, 2024, to present and seek input on the evaluation of alternatives and the preferred alternative for Four-Laning, Intersections and Maintenance Sites.

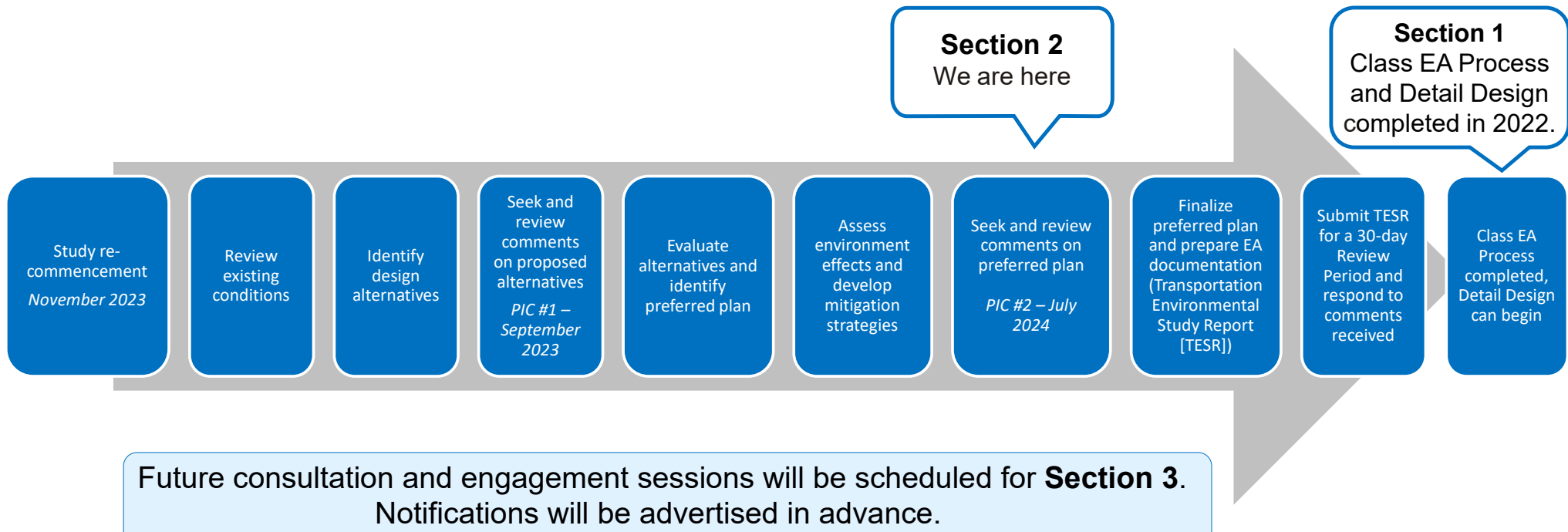
To date, consultation and engagement has included:

- ✓ correspondence with interested ministries and agencies at key milestones
- ✓ previous Public Information Centres (PICs) 1, 2 and 3 and public engagement opportunities
- ✓ engagement with interested Indigenous communities and interested stakeholders

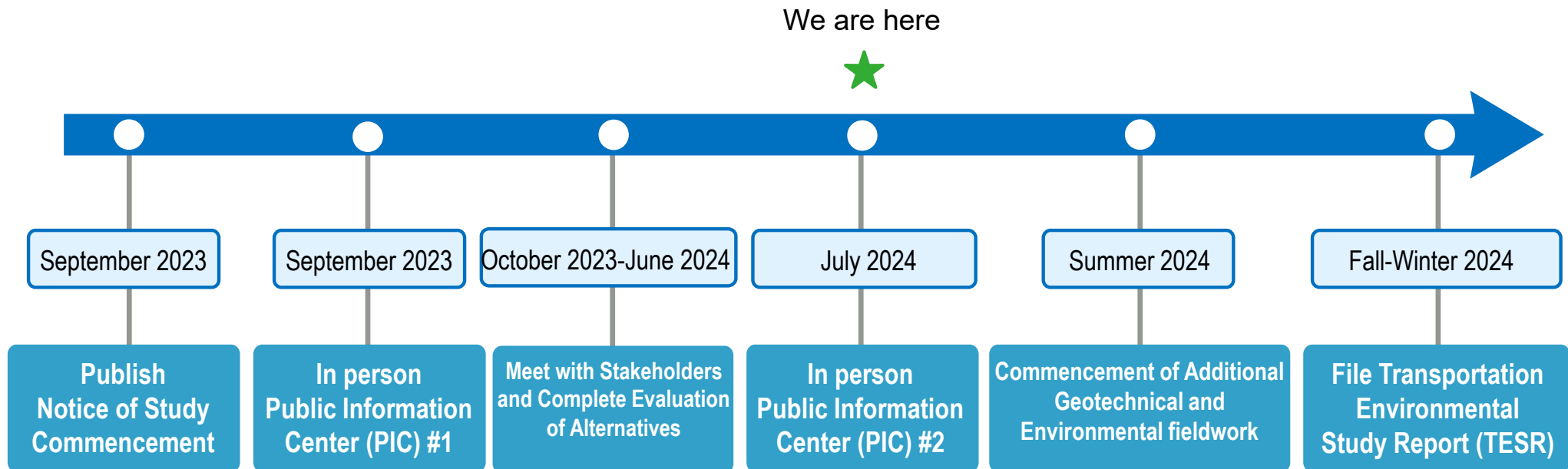
This study is being conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Transportation's *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities* (2000) for a Group 'B' project.

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) pre-approved the process for the planning and design of provincial highway projects. External agency, Indigenous community engagement and public consultation has, and will continue to, take place throughout the project to present study findings.

An overview of the Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Process is provided in the following figure:



The tentative schedule for the Section 2 Route Planning and Preliminary Design Study and related opportunities for consultation and engagement are illustrated in the figure below:



Consultation activities provide an opportunity to identify concerns at any time throughout the project planning and at specific times (key milestones as listed above) to ensure they are given appropriate consideration.



Public Information Centre (PIC) #1 was held in person, at the Moncrief Sports Centre in Kenora on September 20, 2023. The PIC presented the following:

- An overview of the study purpose, study area, and study process;
- The Project History, including the date the initial study was completed;
- The Project Team's consultation and engagement efforts, including project timeline and consultation/engagement milestones;
- The existing conditions in the study area; and
- Alternatives being considered.



The Project Team received a total of 160 comments from the public, interested stakeholders, agencies and Indigenous communities.

Common themes expressed by the general public include:

- Safety concerns regarding location and alignment of interchanges
- Concerns regarding noise and or traffic impacts to surrounding residences
- Impacts to residential traffic
- Preference for alignment to be constructed north of the existing Highway 17 for Section 2 and 3

- Most of the watercourses are small wetland drainage features.
- Whiteshell River, the largest watercourse, flows north west out the west end of Royal Lake.

- These lakes support Walleye and Northern Pike fisheries.
- There are numerous small lakes and beaver ponds in the area as well.
- The larger watercourses support baitfish species, and in some cases support spawning habitat for Northern Pike.



- There are traditional harvesting practices throughout the study area.
- The area topography is variable, with frequent bedrock outcropping and significant bedrock ridges in some areas.
- Watercourses, marshes and wetlands occupy the low-lying areas.

- The area supports a range of wildlife species, such as: White-tailed Deer, Moose, Eastern Wolf sub-species and Bald Eagle.

Highway Four-Laning is accomplished by **twinning** the existing highway or creating segments of **new highway alignment**.



This photo shows an example where a new alignment can minimize impact to an environmental feature (i.e. the watercourse)

Twinning:

- Two new lanes are constructed to carry traffic in one direction. The existing two-lane highway is retained and carries traffic going in the other direction
- The new lanes may be on the north side or the south side to avoid local constraints
- Sections of the existing highway may be upgraded (for example; horizontal / vertical alignment improvements)

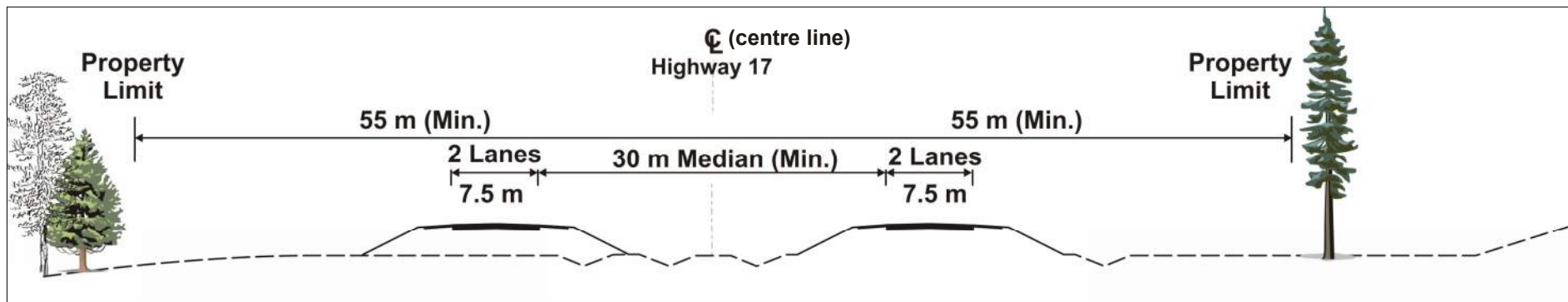
New highway alignment:

- Where segments of the existing highway alignment are not suited to twinning, due to geometry or local constraints, a new four-lane alignment would be required
- Existing highway may be maintained as a local access road

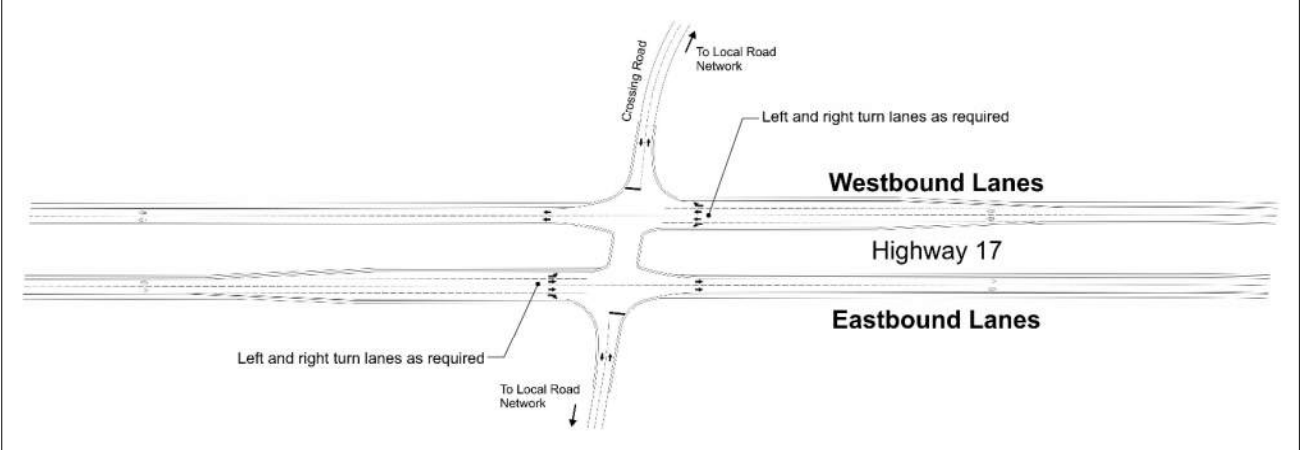
Highway 17 as a Four-Lane Highway would have the following characteristics:

- a minimum 30-metre median will separate two lanes in each direction
- a wider median will be used, where required, to address access, constructability and other considerations
- at-grade intersections initially, with grade-separated interchanges in the longer term
- limited property access, some entrances will become right-in/right-out and/or consolidated with others

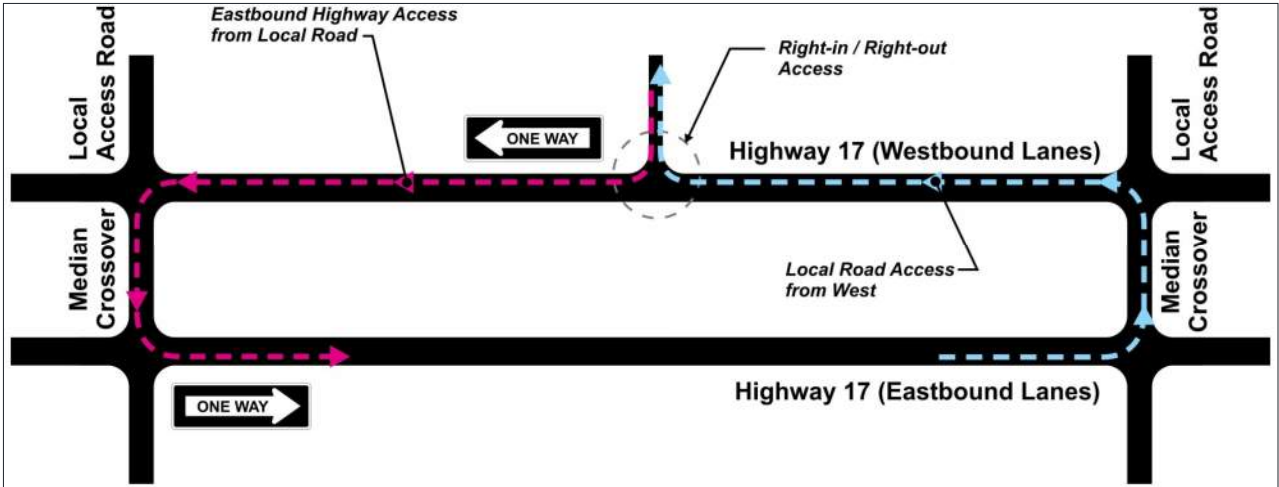
Typical Cross-Section



Typical intersection:



Typical right-in / right-out access:



The evaluation process the Project Team undertook is described in the steps in **red** below. The evaluation process describes how the preferred alternative was selected.

Review alternative designs presented at PIC #1 and public/stakeholder/Indigenous Community input and refine any alternatives as required. There were no updates to the East section alternatives from PIC #1.



Alternative updates since PIC #1 in the West section include:

- Alternative 2A was carried forward for evaluation. Further review would take place on Alternative 2 variations (2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E) if Alternative 2A was chosen as the Preferred.
- A new additional alternative was included, Alternative 3A, to minimize environmental impacts from Alternative 3 and improve the Moth Creek crossing.



Confirm the Evaluation Criteria established through public/stakeholder/Indigenous Community input, similar projects, provincial guidelines, and existing conditions. *Refer to the next display.*



Identify potential impacts on the natural, cultural, and socio-economic environments and technical and financial criteria.



Rank alternative designs according to their relative advantages and disadvantages.



Identify a Preferred Alternative design for West, East, Interchanges and Maintenance Sites.

Based on the feedback received at the previous consultation and engagement events, the project team revisited the evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria below were used to determine the potential advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.

Evaluation Factor	Criteria
Natural Environment	Effect on fish and aquatic habitat
	Effect on terrestrial habitat & vegetation
	Effect on naturally significant areas
	Effect on surface water and groundwater
	Impacts from blasting
	Impacts from infilling
	Access to water
	Impacts to animal crossings
	Carbon/ Project Footprint
	Residential property impacts
Socio-Economic Environment	Business impacts
	Recreational impacts
	Noise impacts
	Property waste and contamination
	Air Quality impacts

Evaluation Factor	Criteria
Cultural Environment	Effect on known pre-contact and contact Indigenous archaeological sites
	Effect on known historic Euro-Canadian archaeological sites
	Effect on built heritage resources and/or cultural landscape resources
	Effect on Traditional Land Uses including hunting, berry picking, manoomin/wild rice, harvesting traditional medicine, access to lands for ceremony
	Impact to Sacred Sites
Technical Considerations	Highway geometrics
	Access
	Compatibility with existing transportation system
	Constructability
	Traffic operations
	Cost

Section 2 – West Alternative W1: Twinning/Widening to the South



✘ This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the west section.

Section 2 – West – Alternative W2A: Twinning/Widening to the North



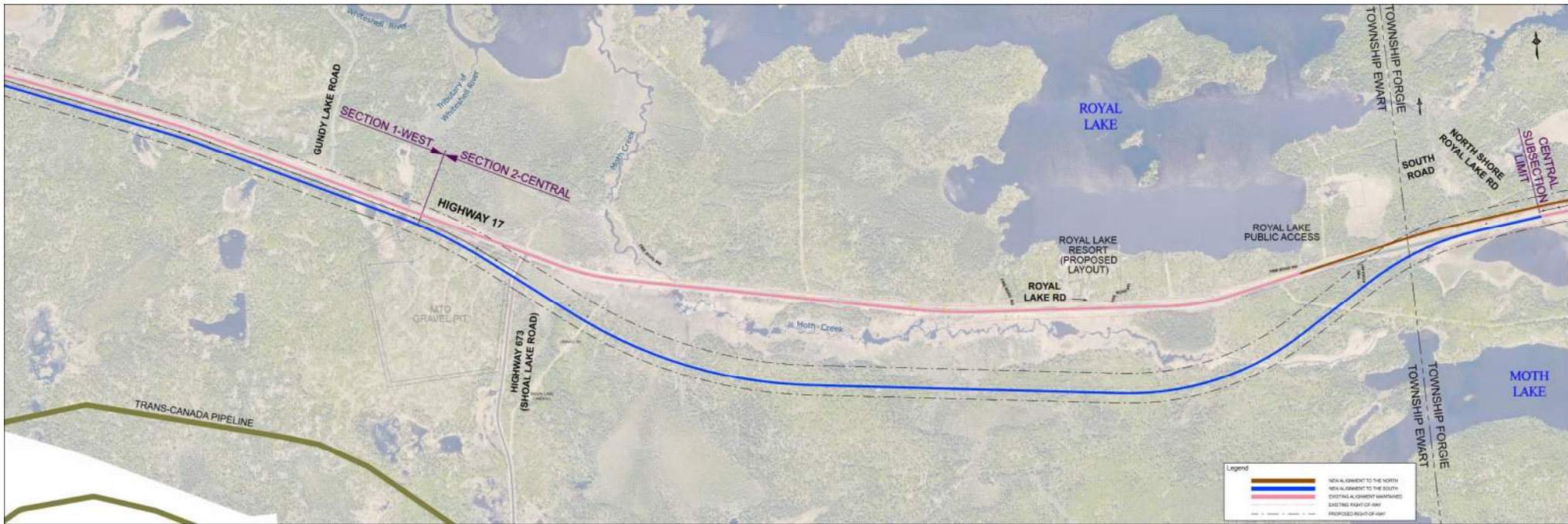
✘ *This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the west section.*

Section 2 – West – Alternative W3: New Alignment Eastbound Lanes South



✘ *This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the west section.*


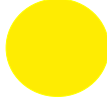
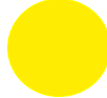
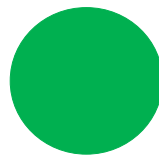
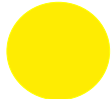

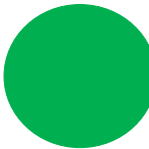
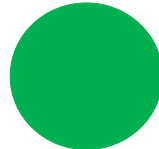
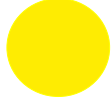
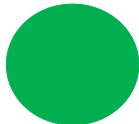
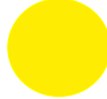
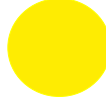

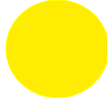
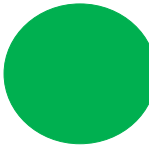
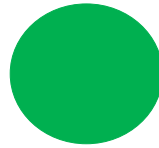




Section 2 – West – Alternative W3A: Realignment of Eastbound Lanes South (minimizes environmental impacts and improves Moth Creek crossing)



 ***This Alternative was carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the west section.***

Evaluation Summary – West Alternatives

*Detailed evaluation table will be available in the TESR

Criterion	Alternatives				Key Benefit / Disadvantage
Name of Alternative	Alt W1	Alt W2A	Alt W3	Alt W3A	
Description of Alternative	Twinning/Widening to the South	Twinning/Widening to the North	Realignment of Eastbound Lanes South	Realignment of Eastbound Lanes South (minimizes environmental impacts and improves Moth Creek crossing)	
Natural Environment					Alternative W1 will impact the majority of Moth Creek running south of Highway 17, requiring extensive grading and channel realignment. Alternative W3A has the least potential impact on the Black Ash swamp and has less risk for impacting snapping and painted turtles.
Socio- Economic					Alternatives W3 and W3A do not impact private property access and have less anticipated noise impacts than W1 and W2A. Alternative W2A has significant impact to private properties.
Cultural					Alternatives W1, W3 and W3A have significant impact to rights-based activities/traditional harvesting practices. Alternative W2A has minimal impact to rights-based practices.
Technical					All Alternatives have similar improvements for safety, traffic operations and impacts to access. Alternative W3 and W3A are easiest from a constructability standpoint. Alternative W1 is located in an area of poor soil conditions and infilling will be required.
Recommendation					Alternative W3A is Preferred.


Section 2 – East – Alternative E1: Twinning/Widening to the North and South



X *This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the east section.*



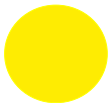







Section 2 – East – Alternative E2: Twinning/Widening to the North

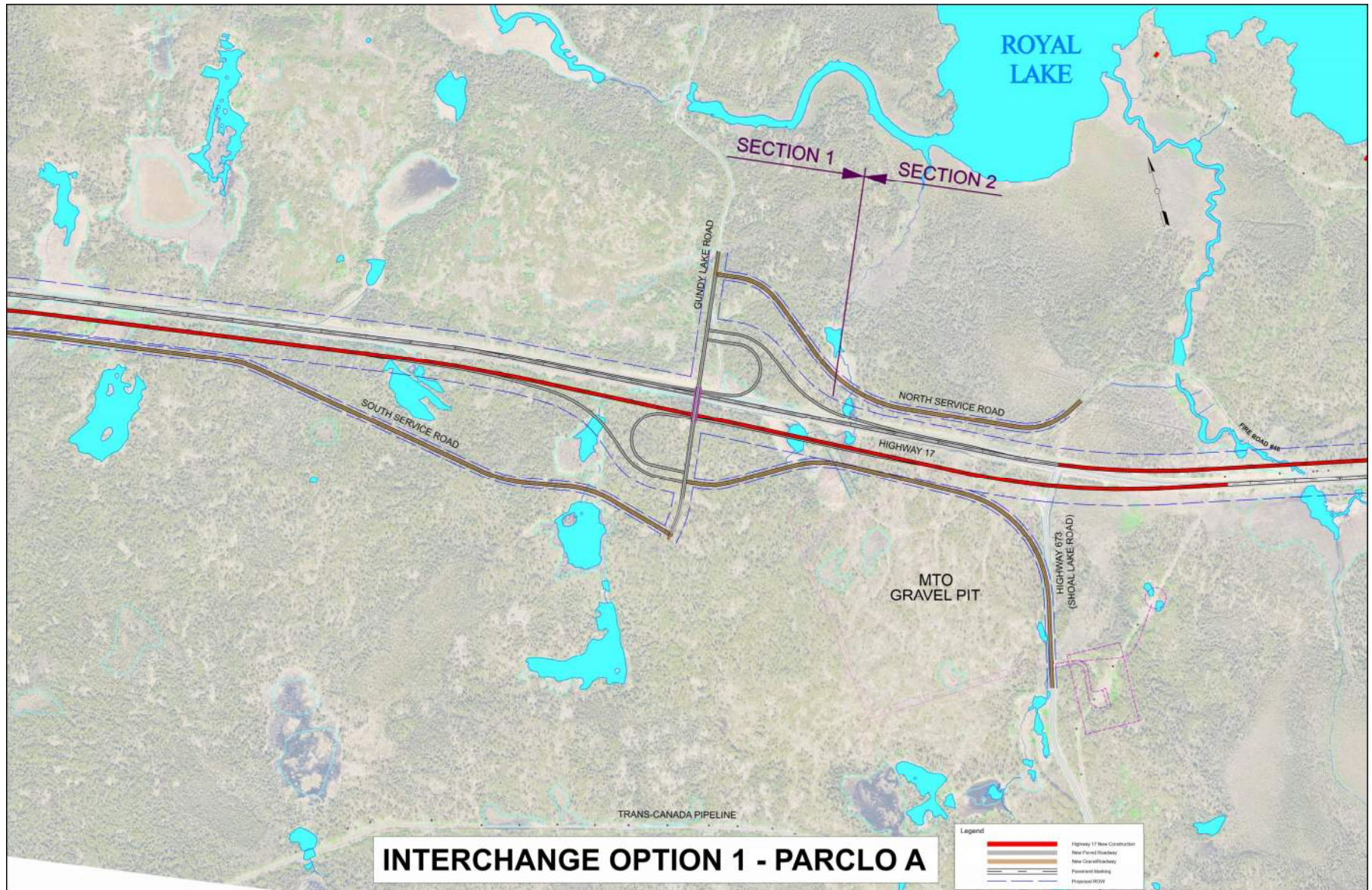


 ***This Alternative was carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the east section.***

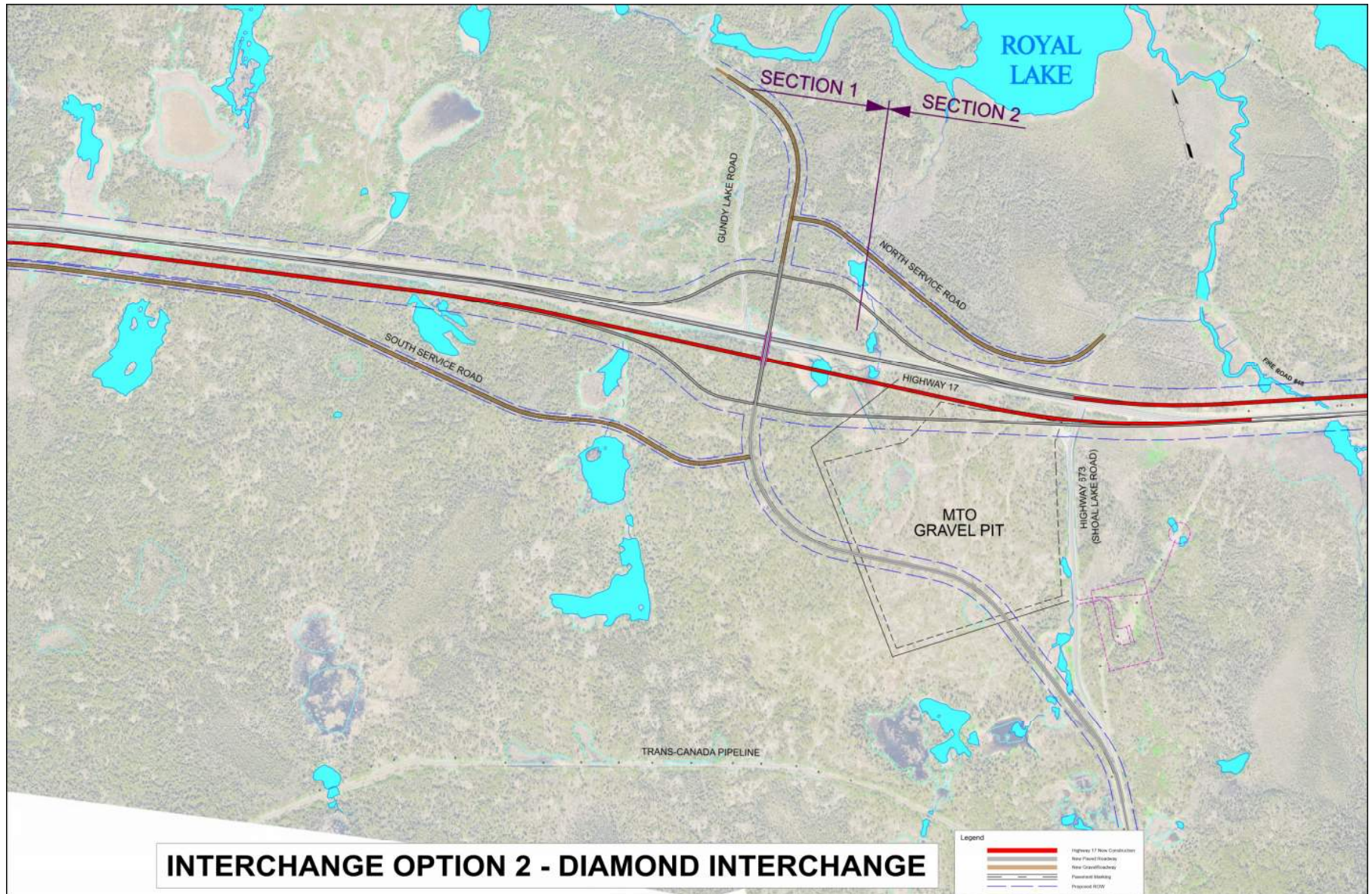
Evaluation Summary – East Alternatives

*Detailed evaluation table will be available in the TESR

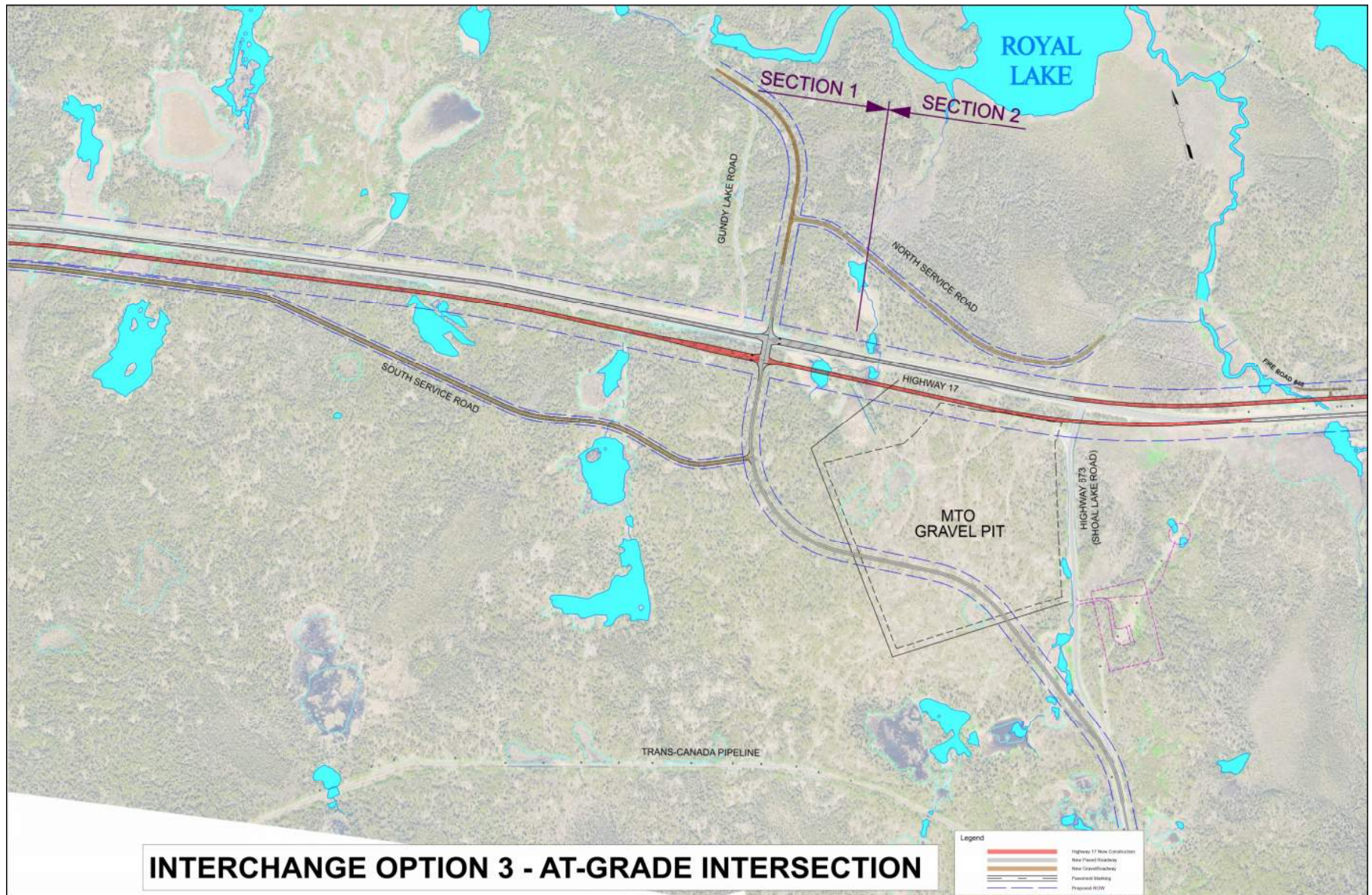
Criterion	Alternatives		Key Benefit / Disadvantage
	Alt E1	Alt E2	
Description of Alternative	Twining/Widening to the North and South	Twining/Widening to the North	
Natural Environment			Alternative E1 has less impact to the creek flowing into Moth Lake than Alternative E2. Alternative E2 has potential impacts to 1 moose aquatic feeding area and has the potential to impact snapping turtle habitat at Moth Lake. Alternative E2 has more impacts to the swamp located north of Moth Lake.
Socio- Economic			Alternative E2 has less impact on private properties on Moth Lake than Alternative E1. Alternative E1 may potentially impact contaminated properties at two locations. Alternative 2 is anticipated to impact 1 contaminated property. Alternative 2 has minimal impact to residential air quality receptors.
Cultural			Neither Alternative E1 or E2 is anticipated to have impacts to registered archeological sites. Alternative E1 potentially impacts resource use in the area near Rush Bay Road.
Technical			Alternatives E1 and E2 have similar improvements for safety, traffic operations and impacts to access. From a technical review, both alternatives are equally preferred.
Recommendation			Alternative E2 is Preferred.



X *This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the interchange options.*





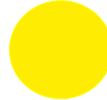
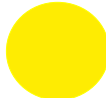
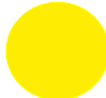




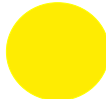
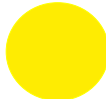




X *This Alternative was not carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the interchange options.*

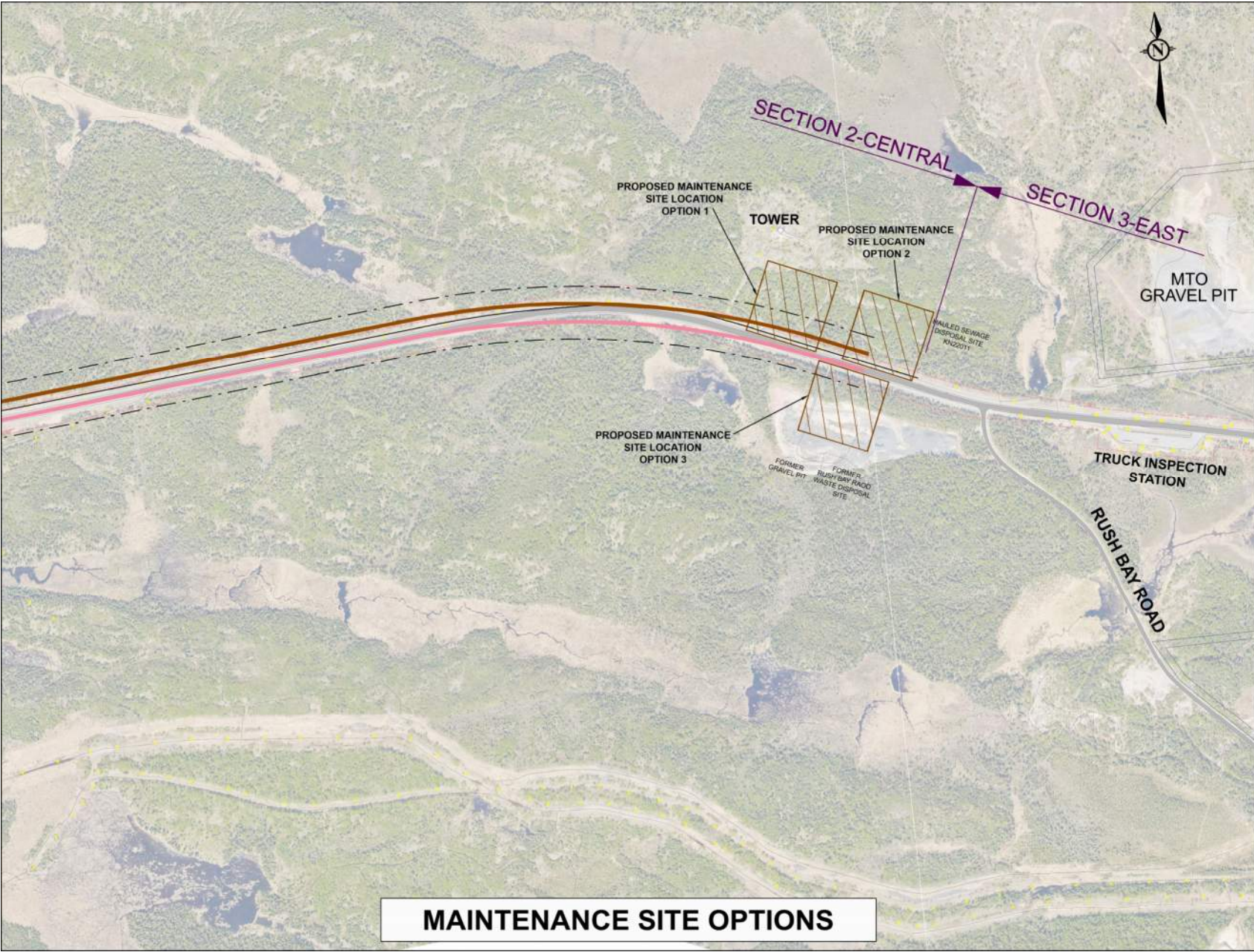


 ***This Alternative was carried forward as the Preferred Alternative. Refer to the evaluation table summary for the interchange options.***

Evaluation Summary – Interchange/ Intersection at Highway 673 and Gundy Lake Road

**Detailed evaluation table will be available in the TESR*




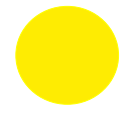
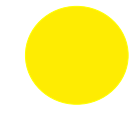




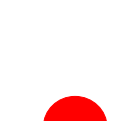





Criterion	Alternatives			Key Benefit / Disadvantage
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	
Description of Alternative	Parclo A	Diamond Interchange	At Grade Intersection	
Natural Environment				Option 1 and Option 2 will both require three or more crossings of a tributary of the Whiteshell River for construction of the North Service Road and ramps. Option 3 will require one additional crossing of a tributary of the Whiteshell River. Option 1 has the least impact on wetlands. Option 2 is proposed to have some impact to wetlands, and Option 3 has the greatest impact to wetlands of all three options.
Socio- Economic				Option 2 and 3 have less suitability for reuse of excess soils in the vicinity of the nearby Hydro Corridor. Option 1 has less potential for re-use of excess soil in the vicinity of the landfill. There are no privately owned properties that will be impacted by any of these alternatives however, Option 3 has the smallest overall footprint.
Cultural				There are no registered archaeological sites impacted by these options. All three options have low potential impact cultural heritage resources.
Technical				Options 1 and 2 fully separates through traffic on Highway 17 from crossing road traffic. Options 1 and 2 will require more complex construction staging to complete grade changes. Option 2 could allow the use of on/off ramps to be utilized during construction to re-direct traffic. Options 1 and 2 provide improved traffic operations for vehicles entering and exiting the highway Option 3 is easier to construct and maintain, and has relatively lower construction and maintenance costs. The intersection can be upgraded to an interchange in the future, if traffic volumes warrant this.
Recommendation				Option 3 is Preferred. An at grade intersection preferred at this time, but an intersection doesn't preclude an interchange in the future.



MAINTENANCE SITE OPTIONS

Evaluation Summary – Maintenance Sites

*Detailed evaluation table will be available in the TESR

Criterion	Alternatives			Key Benefit / Disadvantage
Description of Alternative	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	
	North West of Highway Alignment	North East of Highway Alignment	South East Side of Highway Alignment	
Natural Environment				All three maintenance yards have minimal impact from a natural environment perspective.
Socio- Economic				Option 3 significantly impacts the quarry. Option 1 impacts access to the tower and north side quarry . Option 1 has the least impact on potentially contaminated property, while Option 2 and 3 will have some impacts to nearby sites and may require a Phase 1/ 2 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA).
Cultural				There are no known registered archaeological sites within the proposed maintenance site areas. All three of the proposed maintenance yard sites have low potential to impact to built heritage and cultural heritage landscapes. All options have minimal impact from a cultural heritage perspective.
Technical				Option 1 will impact access to the tower, and to the access to the north side quarry pit. Option 1 and Option 2 create an opportunity to build a new intersection with (realigned) Rush Bay Road and the Maintenance Yard, and therefore provide direct access to Highway 17 whereas with Option 3 access to Highway 17 would be via Rush Bay Road. Option 2 allows the consolidated tower access and north side quarry entrance to be maintained with the potential to connect these accesses to the new intersection (further reducing the number of access points onto the Highway).
Recommendation				Option 2 is preferred as it creates preferred access opportunities and has minimal impact on other sites.

See Separate PDF

Environmental, Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Technical studies have been completed as part of previous works for the Project. Studies for each discipline shown below have been completed to evaluate the route alternatives.

Further studies are planned this (Summer & Early Fall 2024) to determine the impact of the Preferred Alternative on each discipline and to apply mitigation measures. This will be documented in Impact Assessment Reports, which will be included in the Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) and further refined in Detail Design.



Cultural Heritage



Groundwater



Drainage



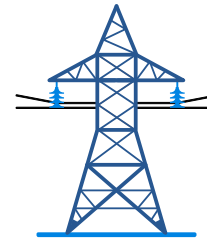
Natural Environment



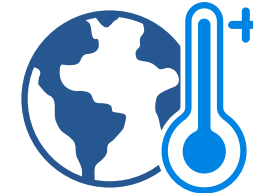
Traffic



Archaeology



Utilities



Climate Change



Geotechnical



Noise



Contamination



Air Quality

After this Public Information Centre, the following steps will be completed in this order:



Review and respond to the comments received following PIC #2;



Incorporate any refinements into the preferred alternatives, to develop the Preferred Plan, based on public / stakeholder / Indigenous Community input;

Complete Environmental and Geotechnical field investigations on Preferred Plan;



Complete Impact Assessment Reports and confirm mitigation measures to address potential environmental impacts (natural, socio-economic, cultural);



A Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) will be prepared to document the existing environmental conditions, the recommended plan and the proposed mitigation measures. The TESR will be available for a 30-day public review period at the end of the study process.

A separate Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) will be prepared for Sections 3, when planning work on that section is completed.

Thank you for attending this Public Information Centre!

Please feel free to ask any questions before you leave.

We also welcome your comments on the materials that were presented today.

Please complete a comment sheet or submit feedback using our project website:
www.4lanehighway17kenora.ca.

We ask that comments are submitted to the project team by August 5, 2024

General comments regarding the study or requests to be added to the project contact list can be submitted through the following project team members at any time during the study:

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