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Haul route study draws high level of interest

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Proponents and opponents to the proposed St. Marys Flamborough Quarry agree that haul routes are a hot topic drawing lots of attention. The number of area residents at last week's public information meeting at the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) clearly demonstrated widespread public interest about which area roads will be used to truck the aggregate.

About 125 residents scrutinized several placards at the first of four public meetings undertaken to select potential haul routes from the proposed quarry at the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. Many stopped to discuss individual concerns with consultants or St. Marys CBM staff while others filled out comment cards, about 55 of which were collected by the study team including members of the transportation consulting firm, BA Group of Toronto.

"The meeting was very well attended; we had a steady stream of people throughout the night," Paul Sarjeant, BA's senior transportation engineer, said of the three-hour session. Graham Flint, chair of Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE), a grassroots group opposed to the quarry, made a similar observation. "There was a good turnout," he agreed, "despite the short notice and inconvenient location."

Many residents questioned the location of the meeting, noting that the RBG is more than 20 km from the proposed quarry area, where the majority of affected residents live. But John Moroz, vice-president and general manager of St. Marys CBM Aggregates, suggested that future haul route meetings will be held nearer the site, especially since the company is proposing a smaller study area for the haul routes.

One of the placards drawing a lot of interest at last week's meeting was a map of a proposed new study area bounded by Campbellville Road, the 10th Concession, Hwy. 6 and Guelph Line. The study area proposed by the City of Hamilton's terms of reference for the haul route study is much more encompassing, including an area from Hwy. 401 in the north to QEW and Hwy. 403 in the south, and from Hwy. 6 in the west to Guelph Line in the east.

The transportation consultants justified the proposed reduction in the area by referring to the potential growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe which indicates the majority of construction projects over the next 15 years will be in Halton and Peel regions. That means the aggregate market will be primarily east of the proposed quarry, with Hwy. 401 being the logical route for about 80 per cent of the project. Under this scenario, the Campbellville area of Milton would bear the largest percentage of quarry truck traffic.

Draft haul routes haven't yet been identified but will be featured at the second public meeting, likely in late July or August, Sarjeant said. He predicted that the study will conclude in October.

QUARRY COMPANY CRITICIZED

Flint criticized the company's move to reduce the study area, saying that the terms of reference for the first public meeting clearly state its purpose as being "to engage the public" and give residents an opportunity to identify concerns and issues about truck traffic. "It's not to have ruled out a large section of the study area."

He accused St. Marys Cement of "blatantly disregarding the process" outlined in the terms of reference and said he and many others were disappointed that no presentations were made at the meeting, contrary to guidelines in the terms of reference. "I would have liked to see a presentation and open discussion from the

floor." Restricting questions from the public to a one-on-one with consultants doesn't allow "for a public airing of the issues," he charged.

He also said that public notice in local newspapers did not meet time deadlines outlined in the terms.

In a letter to the Combined Aggregate Review Team (CART) -- a group with representation from the affected municipalities of Hamilton, Milton, Burlington and Halton Region -- Flint detailed the aggregate company's failure to abide by the terms of reference. "We have a copy of his letter," Sarjeant said. "All of his comments will be taken to heart. We understand the level of frustration out there and we will make every effort to accommodate concerns."

Hamilton senior planner Stan Holiday, who is working on the quarry application, said he has asked members of CART and various groups, such as the Niagara Escarpment Commission, area conservation authorities and school boards, for their reaction to "how the proponent has or has not addressed requirements of the terms of reference" in the running of the first public meeting. He expects responses by next week and will post them on the City's website.

After reviewing the responses, the City will have a meeting with St. Marys officials to discuss the haul route study. The proposed reduction of the study area will also be a topic at the upcoming meeting, Holiday said.



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