



Plan the Bruce: **CONNECTING**

Discussion Paper

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1 Purpose of the Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper has been prepared within the context of Plan the Bruce, Bruce County's Official Plan Review project. The County is undertaking several background studies, reports and plans to inform the new Official Plan, including discussion papers that advance the Guiding Principles identified through the Bruce GPS community engagement exercise.

To date, a total of six discussion papers have been endorsed by County Council or are nearing completion: Good Growth, Homes, Communities, Natural Heritage, Agriculture, and Business. Two other Guiding Principles, being Heritage and Connecting, are planned to be further explored through the Official Plan Review process itself. On this basis, the following Discussion Paper identifies key 'Connecting' policy themes and considerations that will be subject to ongoing consultation and engagement as the policies of the new Official Plan are developed.

2 Background

Plan the Bruce: Connecting is one of eight guiding principles of the Plan the Bruce project to inform a new Official Plan for the County. This Guiding Principle will provide a critical information base to fulfil Bruce GPS Guiding Principle 5: Connecting. The intent of this Principle is to improve the County's overall ability to move people, goods, and information between communities and bring our communities closer together.

The County has identified Connecting as fundamental to continued success for moving people (workers, visitors, family members), goods (food, machinery parts, lumber), and information (data, websites, media) between communities and beyond. Connecting communities has traditionally been thought of within the context of highways and streets, with the focus on motor vehicles. Over time, the County has experienced larger farm machinery, more demand for walking and cycling, growth in the use of horse and buggy, and increased tourism traffic. More change is also anticipated, such as electric and autonomous vehicles.

3 Policy Context

3.1 Planning Act, 1990

Within the context of the ‘Connecting’ Guiding Principle, the Planning Act requires the provision and efficient use of transportation and communication infrastructure systems. More broadly, the Planning Act recognizes the need to manage growth to make efficient use of both existing and planned transportation systems, including public transit. Policies of the County’s new Official Plan will be required to be consistent with matters of Provincial interest, as established through the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement.

3.2 Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, 2020) establishes policy direction regarding matters of Provincial interest. This includes policies to support planning for the efficient and safe movement of people and goods over the planning horizon. Specific consideration will need to be given through policies of the new Official Plan to ensure consistency with the PPS, 2020 in this regard. Specifically, this includes Policy 1.6.7 of the PPS, 2020 which provides policy directions regarding:

- The provision of transportation systems that are safe, energy efficient, and are able to appropriately facilitate the movement of people and goods based on projected needs over the planning horizon.
- Ensure that both existing and planned infrastructure is used efficiently, including through transportation demand management strategies, where feasible.
- Plan for a multi-modal transportation system that includes improved connectivity between existing or planned transportation systems, including those that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Plan for land use patterns, densities, and a mix of uses to appropriately minimize motor vehicle trip generation, support the provision of public transit and active transportation infrastructure, and contribute to more compact and complete communities.

The PPS, 2020 requires the County to plan for and protect corridors and rights-of-way for infrastructure, including transportation, transit and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems to meet existing and forecasted needs. Policy 1.7.1.i) of the PPS, 2020 also encourages the efficient and coordinated communications and telecommunications infrastructure.

3.3 Bruce County Official Plan

The County's in-effect Official Plan establishes a policy framework to guide the physical, social, and economic development of the County and to protect the natural environment within the County.

Section 4.6 of the in-effect Official Plan establishes the County's land use planning policies regarding transportation. Policies of Section 4.6 contemplate the County's transportation objectives and general policies regarding the existing and planned transportation system.

Other policies of the Official Plan establish a road classification system including scenic roads, as well as policies that provide direction on major transportation infrastructure such as railways, recreational trails, airports, and harbours.

Generally, the policies of the County's in-effect Official Plan require a comprehensive review and update to ensure consistency with the PPS, 2020 and conformity with Provincial plans, while recognizing a need to develop policies that are tailored for Bruce County.

3.4 Official Plan Best Practices Report (2020)

The Official Plan Best Practices Report was endorsed by the County Planning and Development Committee in October 2020. The goal of this Review was to examine the role of the Official Plan in improving service delivery which included identified an approach to modernizing the County's Official Plan to make it more effective, relevant, and accessible.

Six recommendations were made regarding transportation specifically:

- A stronger role for the County in planning for, implementing, and maintaining a regional transportation network.
- The County should consider adopting policies in its official plan that would
 - Establish a mobility-based transportation planning which includes transit and active transportation.
 - Consider implementation of “steps” to a transit network as contemplated by policies of the Town of Innisfil’s Official Plan (January 2018).
 - Ensure provisions exist in the new official plan to support more efficient use of existing transportation resources.
 - The County should consider active transportation corridors as a means of linking communities and settlement areas together while providing alternatives to private vehicle use.
 - The new official plan should put in place some of the land use building blocks required for the county to one day implement a transit system.

Based on the findings of the Official Plan Best Practices Report and recommendations, the new Official Plan policies will need to contemplate a comprehensive, systems approach to transportation over the planning horizon.

3.5 Master Transportation Plan (2021)

A County Master Transportation Plan (MTP) was approved in 2021 under the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process. The MTP recommends a framework to plan for future land transportation infrastructure and services.

The MTP establishes a recommended strategy for implementation. Certain recommended strategies of the MTP may be given consideration through the Official Plan project, including planning for growth, asset management, transit and mobility, active transportation, and a complete streets approach. Many of the MTP recommended strategies can be advanced through the policies of an updated Official Plan, while other considerations, such as specific design standards and guidelines would be developed independently of the Official Plan. Once adopted, Official Plan policies, standards and guidelines could all be used in the review of development applications.

4 Discussion

A well-planned transportation system is a fundamental consideration to realizing complete and healthy communities, while contributing to longer-term economic prosperity. The County has undertaken important background work to inform an updated comprehensive transportation planning and land use framework. This includes recommendations and findings that can be given consideration through the Official Plan project. Specific consideration should also be given to providing for a more robust and complete communications and telecommunications infrastructure system within the County.

On this basis, the following discussion topics are recommended to be further explored within the context of the ‘Connecting’ Guiding Principle and through the Official Plan Review process:

1. Explore and further refine the transportation and connectivity priorities of the County and its residents within the context of what can be achieved through land use policy.
2. Confirm which recommended strategies of the MTP are appropriate or desirable to advance through an updated land use and transportation policy framework through the new Official Plan.
3. Work closely with both County and Local Municipality staff to develop a transportation policy framework that is realistic and can be feasibly implemented over the planning horizon.
4. Consult with relevant utilities and service providers to inform a policy framework that will enable communication and telecommunication infrastructure and associated services to be coordinated and interconnected.
5. Give specific consideration to the relationship between the ‘Connecting’ Guiding Principle and the Good Growth, Communities, Homes and Business Guiding Principles when updating Official Plan policies.
6. Consider the role of asset management as established through policies of the new Official Plan, including implementation monitoring and evaluation considerations.
7. Broadly consult and engage on an updated Schedule B: Roads with County residents, local municipalities, and the Province.
8. Consider whether there is a role for ‘Scenic Routes’ and accompanying policies in the context of the new Official Plan

5 Next Steps

This Discussion Paper has been prepared within the context of the Plan the Bruce project and to advance the ‘Connecting’ Guiding Principle of bringing our communities closer together. It is intended to serve as a preliminary basis for further consultation and engagement and the discussion topics set out above will be further explored through the Official Plan Review process.