
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

EXPANSION OF HIGHWAY 417/17

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH CONNECTION

Thank you

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to the Province of Ontario for its ongoing commitment to the extension of Highway 417. This project represents more than just infrastructure—it's a step toward unlocking the full potential of the County of Renfrew and, by extension, contributing to the prosperity of Ontario as a whole.

Our Vision

At its core, this proposal is about connection. Highway 17 and Highway 417 are lifelines for our communities, industries, and families. They are the arteries through which opportunity flows - opportunity for economic growth, safer transportation, and a brighter future for everyone who calls the County of Renfrew home.

Our request is simple but transformative:

1. **Expedite the extension of Highway 417** from Scheel Drive to Bruce Street.
2. **Adopt a phased strategy for Highway 17 expansion** between the Towns of Renfrew and Deep River, focusing on:
 - Replacing traffic signals with interchanges and roundabouts.
 - Increasing passing lanes or implementing a 2+1 highway model.

This isn't just about roads. It's about building the pathways to prosperity and ensuring the safety of everyone who relies on these vital connections.

Why This Matters

The commitment made in 2019 to extend Highway 417 was a promise of progress. But progress delayed is progress denied. Today, we still lack a target completion date. This delay not only hinders our economic potential but also compromises the safety of all who travel this corridor.

Highways 17 and 417 are more than routes—they are the backbone of Eastern Ontario's economy. With rail service discontinued since 2010, these highways are the sole means for transporting goods to, from, and through our County. Industries like Canadian Forces Base Petawawa and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories rely on this critical infrastructure to sustain operations and fuel growth.

Every signalized intersection on Highway 17 represents a potential bottleneck for economic progress and a risk for drivers. Every missed opportunity to improve passing lanes is a missed opportunity to ensure safer travel.

Background

Your Ministry's commitment in 2019 to continue the extension of Highway 417, from Scheele Drive to Bruce Street, was viewed as significant step forward for the residents, businesses, and the overall economic growth of the County of Renfrew. However, the County has been disappointed with the slow progress of the project, and there is still no target completion date identified.

Highway 17 and 417, as part of the Trans-Canada Highway, is the primary route connecting Eastern Ontario to the rest of the Province, and Quebec. With rail service discontinuing in 2010, the transport of goods through, to, and from our County can only be by truck, thus making this Highway a crucial economic driver for the County, as well as all of the communities and industries within. The Highway facilitates the effective transport of people, goods, and services throughout the County; as well as to other key destinations such as the City of Ottawa, Greater Toronto Area, and City of Montréal; making this corridor extremely valuable. Highway 17 is the main access and supply route for Canadian Forces Base Petawawa and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Inc., two of many industries who are expanding their transport needs and rely on this Highway.

A Strategic Path Forward

We understand the complexities of highway expansion, but we also know that meaningful progress begins with bold steps. We propose a phased approach to strategically address these challenges:

- **Safety First:** Replace high-risk signalized intersections with interchanges and roundabouts to reduce accidents and improve traffic flow.
- **Enhance Efficiency:** Substantially expand passing lanes or adopt the innovative 2+1 highway model. This globally recognized design balances safety with cost-effectiveness, ensuring smoother journeys for all.

These measures aren't just interim solutions—they are foundational investments in the future expansion of Highway 17 and the safety of everyone who uses it.

Phased Approach

The warrants for extension of Highway 417 to Bruce Street have already been met and will be exceeded, compounding the need to expedite this project. However, it is also critical that expansion of Highway 17 throughout the County of Renfrew continue in order to support economic growth and ensure the safe transport of residents, goods, and services. The County is aware of the complexities and timelines involved in such a substantial highway expansion and has developed a strategic, phased, solution for consideration.

There are eleven (11) signalized intersections on Highway 17 from Renfrew to Deep River, and numerous non-signalized intersections. Intersections on Highway 17 have been identified as 'hot spots' for accidents, with some being fatal. Strategically addressing each intersection in a manner that aligns with the future expansion of Highway 17 would significantly improve safety for all users, as well as substantially improve the flow of traffic. Construction of interchanges and roundabouts at arterial road intersections would reduce the risk of accident occurrences, reduce the severity of collisions when they occur, and increase the flow of traffic by making it continuous; an excellent interim measure until expansion is warranted.

Highway 17, from Renfrew to Deep River is approximately 110km in length and has approximately 21.2km (19%) of passing lanes. The limited passing areas, combined with the intermittent traffic flows from signalized intersections, causes high risk driver behavior. A significant increase in passing areas, or the incorporation of a 2 + 1 highway model, would assist in addressing this. A 2 + 1 highway is a three-lane highway, with a centre passing lane that changes direction intermittently. This highway model is used around the world and a project is underway on Highway 11, north of North Bay.

Alignment with Your Mission

The strategic approach identified above would align well with several of your Ministry's core commitments and key deliverables as described below:

1 – Keep Ontario's transportation network safe and ensure that the province's transportation system remains among the safest in the world.

Strategically implementing interchanges and highway roundabouts in place of signalized intersections, and limiting access at some intersections would significantly improve safety of all Highway 17 users in Renfrew County.

2 – Invest in an integrated transportation infrastructure network that enables economic prosperity and future sustainability for all Ontario communities.

Expansion of Highway 417 and improvements to Highway 17 are critical to supporting existing businesses, industrial expansion, and the overall transport of goods & services throughout our County.

5 – Delivering transportation solutions for the people of Ontario by working effectively with agency partners.

Our County welcomes the opportunity to continue working in partnership with your Ministry on projects such as these, to the benefit of all.

Conclusion

This isn't just about highways—it's about building the future. It's about laying the groundwork for safer communities, stronger industries, and a more connected province. Together, we have the opportunity to turn today's challenges into tomorrow's triumphs.

Let's take the next step—together.