

Community Benefits

The Windsor-Essex Parkway will provide the local community with benefits.

Design of the Parkway

The design is unprecedented in its community enhancement features for any highway, anywhere in Ontario.

- More than 300 acres of green space will make The Windsor-Essex Parkway a unique solution for the local community.
- Pedestrians and cyclists will enjoy 20 km of recreational trails.
- The inclusion of 11 tunnels along the Parkway alignment will improve community connections while restoring long-forgotten natural linkages.
- Habitats for plant and animal species protected under the provincial *Endangered Species Act* will be protected, created and restored through a variety of strategies.
- Noise barriers and berms will effectively reduce sound levels and will be designed with community input to consider the perspectives of drivers on The Windsor-Essex Parkway and the residential community adjacent to the noise barrier.
- Local and international traffic will be separated, taking trucks off local streets. Service roads will meet community needs to access schools, shops, neighbourhoods and natural areas.
- With a below-grade freeway, traffic will no longer have to brake, idle or accelerate at traffic signals. This, in combination with cleaner fuels and new North American diesel truck technologies, will improve air quality.

Public Input

An unprecedented amount of community and stakeholder consultation went into the identification of The Windsor-Essex Parkway as the recommended plan for the access road to the proposed new border crossing. In the next phase of design and the upcoming construction of the Parkway, the community will continue to have opportunities to benefit through community consultation, incentives to encourage local business involvement, competitive innovation, local employment opportunities and community-based partnerships.

Local Sourcing

The request for proposals included provisions for the short-listed firms to submit a proposal that provides for involvement of local businesses and First Nations in the project. The design and construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway represents a significant economic opportunity for local workers, suppliers and contractors. Local workers are expected to have a significant role to play through various stages of the delivery and the project will generate an estimated 12,000 project-related jobs, with the majority of the jobs in the Windsor-Essex region.

Preparing the Local Workforce for Construction

Workforce WindsorEssex is a local organization with the goal of preparing the local workforce for new jobs at the right time and ensuring employers remain competitive. Ontario facilitated communications between Workforce WindsorEssex and the short-listed bidders to gather information and develop a report on what jobs will need to be filled and what skills will be needed during Parkway construction. This advance planning will help the community take full advantage of the thousands of upcoming jobs.

Sponsoring Academic Research in Transportation

Ontario provided funding for the University of Windsor and its Cross Border Studies Program for a comprehensive assessment of the economic impacts of The Windsor-Essex Parkway project including employment/income stimulus effects through construction and accessibility benefits through an improved transportation system. The study will provide a template for assessing other projects in other regions.

Recycling Materials from Demolition

In another partnership, a first-of-its-kind pilot project for the Province of Ontario, called *WE Pay it Forward*, is exploring how materials from buildings purchased by Ontario and slated for demolition prior to the construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway can be reclaimed and recycled back into the community through charitable initiatives. A steering committee of local volunteers is managing the pilot project. To date, 150 tonnes of material has been salvaged from over 100 buildings. Over 200 volunteers have given their time to make this pilot project a success, providing local charities with real benefits. Ontario will explore opportunities to expand this program. Materials that would normally be destined for local landfills are being diverted back into the community both reducing waste and helping people in need.

Replacement and Relocation of Housing

Trillium Court, a social housing development located in the Town of LaSalle, will be displaced to enable construction of The Windsor-Essex Parkway. Ontario is undertaking the relocation of the 56-unit development in partnership with the non-profit organization that owns the development and in close consultation with Trillium Court residents. Currently, the relocation project is at the site selection stage. Criteria for selecting a new location are based on feedback Ontario heard through consultation meetings with residents and the owner. These include proximity to the existing Trillium Court, transit, shopping, and schools. Ontario has committed to make this move as seamless and uncomplicated as possible for residents. Ontario has also committed to ongoing communications and consultation to keep residents informed and to provide them with opportunities for input during the design of their new homes. Residents will benefit from living in a new facility and the facility itself will be designed using the latest green technology wherever possible.

Protecting Species at Risk

The environment is an important issue for the local community and for Ontario. Species at risk were the focus of extensive study during the DRIC study. This study included hundreds of hours of fieldwork over multiple seasons to study plant and animal species at risk. The information collected on species at risk and their habitat was taken into consideration during the planning for the Parkway. Ontario avoided impacts as much as possible and developed scientifically supported approaches for relocation of individual plants and animals, and restoration and enhancement of habitat which supports their life cycle requirements. An ecosystem approach is being followed to help ensure the success of mitigation practices. Measures will be put in place to ensure that all relocation areas will be protected for the long-term, not just during the construction period. We are committed to protecting and restoring Essex County's unique ecosystems for years to come.

The Windsor-Essex Parkway will be the most significant single highway investment made in Ontario history. This modern, state-of-the-art facility will support existing industry, assist in the attraction of new investment, and provide the community with countless benefits that will contribute to improved quality of life.