

# **Highway 413 - Frequently Asked Questions**

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## **A. GENERAL**

### **What is the planned route of this highway?**

It is planned to run from Highway 400 in northern Vaughan, across Caledon and northern Brampton to the junction of Highways 401 and 407 in Halton Hills near Milton. It will cover a distance of 52 km. Northward extensions of Highways 410 and 427 will be built to connect with Highway 413, bringing the total length of new highway construction length to 59 km. The width of the 413 right-of-way will be 110 m, with an adjacent 60 m transitway, for a total width of 170 m.

### **Who is responsible for Highway 413?**

Planning and funding highways is a provincial responsibility, under the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), but the federal government has an obligation to ensure highways don't damage areas of federal responsibility such as fisheries, migratory birds, federally-listed endangered species and relations with Indigenous governments.

### **What is the current status of the highway?**

Planning for Highway 413 started in 2007 and the Stage 1 provincial Environmental Assessment (EA), covering transportation alternatives, was completed in 2012. The project was suspended in 2015 and shelved in 2018 by the Wynne government, but was resurrected by the Ford government later in 2018. The route is currently undergoing a Stage 2 EA and preliminary design.

### **How much will Highway 413 cost?**

The most recent media estimate is \$10 billion (land + construction costs). However, the MTO won't say how much the project will actually cost. Source: "Ontario keeping costs of Highway 413 hidden from public"; Toronto Star; Monday, August 28, 2023

### **What is a possible time line?**

The MTO has indicated there is no timeline for construction. Prior to construction, the province must receive clearance on the EA, complete property acquisition and relocate utilities. At a recent update meeting with York Region Council, MTO noted that the comparable Highway 407 East extension took 10 years to construct after EA clearance was obtained.

### **What is the status of the adjacent hydro corridor project?**

A project entitled "Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor" is being advanced by the Ministry of Energy and the Independent Electrical System Operator (IESO). The corridor is envisioned to be located parallel and adjacent to the highway. The most recent information on this project can be found in ERO 019-1503, posted November 18, 2020.

## **B. TRANSPORTATION ASPECTS**

### **How does the Province justify this highway?**

With one million+ new residents coming to this western part of the GTA by 2051, there is definitely a need to add more transportation capacity. Congestion already costs the GTA about \$11 billion/yr. The Province claims that its modeling shows a definite need for Highway 413 to relieve congestion, even after including rapid transit expansion, highway widenings and travel demand measures. However, this modeling was done in about 2010 as part of the Stage 1 EA, and may not be valid any more. As the EA has now moved to Stage 2, it is unlikely that this very old modeling will be updated with “modern” scenarios like recommended by the expert Advisory Panel (see question below).

### **Will Highway 413 “reduce gridlock” in the GTA, as claimed by the Province?**

Not significantly for most GTA drivers. The Province has modelled that a traveller from northern Vaughan to Milton will save 30 minutes by taking Highway 413 versus Highways 400/401. However, only 8% of local drivers will use the entire route, with most only traveling 19 km with savings of 6 minutes. Furthermore, this time savings will soon disappear, as increases in congestion as a result of induced demand are likely to reduce these time savings to zero. Of interest, the modeling also showed that a traveller using Highway 407, a tolled road, for the same Vaughan – Milton trip will save 17 minutes versus using Highway 413.

### **What’s induced demand?**

New roads create more drivers. All across the world, traffic engineers find that new roads, **unless tolled**, improve traffic for only a very brief period before becoming just as congested as the road they replaced. Google ‘vox induced demand’ for great articles and videos on this issue. The Province has indicated that Highway 413 will **NOT be tolled**, meaning that induced demand will materialize.

### **Are there better ways to improve traffic?**

Yes. For movement of people, rapid transit is much more cost-effective than Highway 413, and would better connect GTA-West residents to existing urban centres where the majority of jobs will be located. For freight movement, a better option is to subsidize trucks to use Highway 407. This would get trucks off the 401, reduce congestion immediately and cost billions of dollars less than building Highway 413.

### **How does rapid transit compare to Highway 413 in terms of cost-effectiveness?**

A 2020 report by Environmental Defence, Transport Action Ontario and Sustainable Vaughan estimated that, for the same capital cost as Highway 413, the province could expand service on two GO train lines (Kitchener, Milton), launch a new GO train line to Bolton and build bus rapid transit or light rail in places like Brampton and Vaughan near the 413 proposed route. This transit investment would move between 22,000 and 29,000 people per hour (peak direction) while the 413 would move only about 7,000, a **factor of at least 3-fold!** All these transit projects are in Metrolinx’s long-term plans, but are currently unfunded.

### **How can Highway 407 be used for truck movement?**

A 2023 report by Environmental Defence, building on work done by Transport Action Ontario, showed that moving trucks to Highway 407 would save up to 80 minutes of travel time for truckers and remove 12,000 to 21,000 trucks per day from Highway 401, making Highway 413 unnecessary for freight. Subsidizing the toll on the 407 for truckers is therefore a win-win-win solution for commuters, the trucking industry and taxpayers as well, as it would also cost \$6 billion less than constructing the proposed Highway 413. Furthermore, implementing a truck discount on Highway 407 can be achieved almost immediately, versus a 10+ year lead time to construct Highway 413.

### **What was the 2017 provincial expert Advisory Panel and what did it recommend?**

An expert advisory panel was commissioned by the Wynne government on Highway 413. The final report expressed misgivings with the highway project, in view of uncertainties in future transportation technology (eg autonomous vehicles), economic uncertainties (eg work-from-home) and policy changes (eg climate change, complete communities). MTO was urged to model a broad range of these scenarios. The panel recommended 4 specific promising alternatives: (a) prioritize expansion of existing highways first (b) consider congestion pricing, as it offers a much larger travel time savings than a new highway (c) provide truck priority on Highway 407 (d) consider more compact land use patterns than assumed in the Stage 1 EA, consistent with recent actual growth.

### **What did the 2022 Auditor General of Ontario say about Highway 413?**

The Auditor General (AG) found that the Ford government prioritized Highway 413 despite Ministry of Transportation experts recommending it not be built yet. The headline in the news release by the AG was “Ontario is Ignoring its Own Experts when Ultimately Deciding When and Where to Build Highways”

## **C. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS**

### **Will Highway 413 harm the Greenbelt?**

A loophole in the Greenbelt Act allows the government to build ‘infrastructure’ in the Greenbelt and Highway 413 will directly pave 400 acres of the Greenbelt and future sprawl surrounding the highway will most likely gobble up even more Greenbelt land.

### **What about farmland?**

The damage to farmland will be even more significant. In addition to 400 acres of the Greenbelt, Highway 413 will directly pave over more than 2,000 acres of high-quality prime farmland and wildlife habitat.

### **What impact will Highway 413 have on waterways in the area?**

The proposed route of Highway 413 has 85 stream and river crossings. Many of these watersheds, including the Credit River Watershed and Etobicoke Creek watershed, *already* have salt levels that are far above safe levels.

### **What impact will Highway 413 have on endangered species?**

Highway 413 will negatively impact 29 federally listed species at risk, including endangered birds, fish and amphibians that could disappear from the Greater Toronto Area and Canada if the highway is built. Critical habitats for 5 federal species at risk (western chorus frog, red-headed woodpecker, redbelted dace, rapids clubtail and bank swallow) have been identified, 4 of which are also protected under provincial legislation.

## **D. HUMAN HEALTH**

### **What is the impact of the highway on human health?**

Expressways like Highway 413 promote a car-dependent lifestyle, leading to increased risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and obesity. There is also increased localized air pollution (particulates, nitrogen oxides) near expressways, causing higher mortality.

## **E. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **If Highway 413 isn't the best option to reduce traffic congestion, why is it being built?**

The Highway 413 scheme is part of the same larger real estate and land speculation scandal that led to the Greenbelt removals that has already caused two cabinet ministers and multiple political staffers to resign. Developers in the area stand to make billions of dollars as York and Peel Regions sprawl out to reach this highway.

### **What is the position of local municipalities?**

Municipal Councils in Toronto, Vaughan, Mississauga, Halton Hills, Halton Region and Peel Region have all voted to oppose this highway.

### **What should the province do?**

The current provincial government should cancel this project and redirect the money to projects that will be more useful to Ontarians. These could include rapid transit investment, truck toll subsidy on Highway 407, health care, affordable housing, senior care, education and child care.

### **How should the federal government get involved?**

The federal government previously designated this project for an Impact Assessment, but legal flaws in the previous version of the Impact Assessment Act have likely led to the cancellation of this assessment. The federal government can and should redesignate the highway for another Impact Assessment under a revised Impact Assessment Act.

### **Read more here about the 413:**

file:///Users/Guest/Downloads/Highway-413-Paving-Paradise-Report\_Environmental-Defence%20(1).pdf



### **Take action:**

<https://act.environmentaldefence.ca/page/135962/action/1>

<https://davidsuzuki.org/action/stop-highway-413/>