

April 16, 2026

Sent by Email
questions@altotrain.ca

Alto
High-Speed Rail

Re: Township of Asphodel-Norwood Response

The Council of the Township of Asphodel-Norwood has been actively participating in the ongoing consultation process regarding the proposed high-speed rail project being advanced by Alto. Through this process, Council has heard from many residents who have shared questions, concerns, and perspectives about the potential impacts of this project on our community.

While the Township recognizes that this is a federally led initiative and that the municipal role in the process is still evolving, Council believes it is important to share the thoughts and concerns being expressed within our community at this early stage.

We understand that a number of technical, environmental, and community considerations remain under review through your ongoing planning and consultation processes. However, we would like to provide several suggestions on how the consultation process may be strengthened and how potential impacts on rural municipalities such as ours can be addressed.

The Township of Asphodel-Norwood recognizes that a project of this scale has the potential to influence the future of our region. While projects of this magnitude inevitably create both opportunities and challenges for host communities, we believe that careful planning and continued collaboration can help ensure that impacts are mostly positive.

Property Values and Land Acquisition

Council continues to hear concerns related to property values and uncertainty surrounding the potential rail corridor. The current mapping identifies two broad corridors that encompass a significant land area within our municipality. While we understand that many properties may ultimately not be affected once a final route is selected, property owners within the corridor areas are currently facing uncertainty about the future of their homes, businesses, and farmland.

This uncertainty may affect decisions regarding investment, property improvements, and long-term planning. Council encourages timely decisions regarding the preferred corridor so that property owners who are ultimately unaffected can proceed with confidence in their plans.

Residents have also expressed concerns regarding land acquisition and potential expropriation. On behalf of those living and working along the corridor, Council requests that any land acquisition processes be transparent, clearly communicated, and provide fair compensation to homeowners, businesses, and agricultural operators for lands acquired and for any associated impacts to their operations.

In situations where land acquisition results in increased costs or reduced operational viability, appropriate compensation mechanisms should be considered. For example:

- If a farm property is divided by the rail corridor and it becomes impractical for a farmer to operate both portions of the property, the landowner should be fairly compensated should the land need to be sold.
- If an aggregate or mining operator is required to change haul routes due to the development of the rail corridor, compensation should be considered for additional transportation costs incurred.

While these examples are not exhaustive, they illustrate the importance of ensuring that individuals and businesses whose property rights or operations are affected are treated fairly and provided with reasonable support as they adjust to these changes.

Residents have also raised concerns regarding large infrastructure projects in nearby communities where land was acquired but remained undeveloped for extended periods of time, such as the Pickering Airport and the Trenton Air Force Base. Council encourages Alto to ensure that only lands necessary for the project are acquired and that any acquired properties are maintained to appropriate municipal and community standards until development proceeds.

Further, Council asks whether former landowners would be given the opportunity for first right of refusal should any acquired lands later be deemed unnecessary for the project. This question is particularly important in rural communities where farmland may have been in family ownership for generations.

Transportation Network and Road Infrastructure

Based on information shared during public consultation sessions, Council understands that the proposed high-speed rail system would not include level crossings, and that elevated or underground routing through the municipality may not be feasible.

The closure of north-south concession roads could significantly impact local transportation patterns. Council encourages careful consideration of impacts to residents, agricultural operations, emergency services, local businesses, and school transportation routes.

Where feasible, service roads parallel to the corridor may help maintain access without requiring lengthy detours or redirecting slow-moving farm equipment onto major highways.

Council also notes that agricultural and industrial equipment continues to increase in size and weight. Any supporting infrastructure, including overpasses and underpasses, should be designed to safely accommodate modern equipment both now and in the future.

Community Impacts and Project Alternatives

Based on information presented during the consultation process, it is understood that approximately 20-30 trains may traverse the corridor daily. Council encourages the use of technologies, operational strategies, and scheduling practices that minimize disruption to residents.

Residents have also raised questions regarding previously studied High Frequency Rail proposals. Some stakeholders have suggested that alternative models may have different impacts on rural communities. Council encourages the continued evaluation of alternative approaches where appropriate and requests that any comparative analysis be made publicly available so that communities can better understand the potential implications of different models.

Additionally, Council encourages the use of the most current technologies and planning practices to ensure the long-term viability and adaptability of the project.

Municipal Financial and Service Impacts

The proposed project may also have financial and operational implications for municipalities along the corridor.

For example, lands that are currently taxed at market value may see reductions in assessed value, or land used for the rail corridor may become tax-exempt or subject to different taxation structures. Either situation could result in a loss of municipal tax revenue.

Changes to the road network, including the creation of dead-end roads or new service roads, may require adjustments to winter maintenance routes and operational staffing to maintain compliance with municipal service standards.

Emergency service delivery may also be impacted, potentially requiring additional equipment, staffing, or facilities to maintain response times. Specialized training and equipment may also be required to respond to rail-related incidents.

To address these potential impacts, Council encourages the development of a robust community benefit program to address municipal costs and revenue impacts associated with hosting this infrastructure.

Agricultural Impacts

As a rural municipality with a strong agricultural base, Council is particularly attentive to impacts on farming operations and prime agricultural lands.

The Township has reviewed the response provided by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and generally aligns with its recommendations, including:

- Avoiding prime agricultural areas;
- Minimizing fragmentation of farm properties;
- Protecting agricultural drainage systems essential to crop production;
- Addressing construction-related impacts on farming operations and ensuring safe and appropriately sized crossings for farm equipment and livestock;
- Completing independent and transparent agricultural systems impact assessments.

Council also recognizes the recent resolution passed by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which calls for a halt on the proposed project to allow for a comprehensive economic, social, and environmental assessment and meaningful consultation with agricultural, forestry, and rural communities.

If the project proceeds, it will be important to ensure that access to farmland, woodlots, and maple groves is maintained and that appropriate agricultural crossings are provided where required. Further, fair and proportional compensation must also recognize the long-term impacts that a permanent rail corridor may have on agricultural operations compared to that of highways or transmission lines.

Environmental, Water Resources, and Community Connectivity

The Township contains environmentally sensitive lands that contribute to the long-term sustainability of the region. Council encourages mitigation measures such as wildlife corridors and habitat preservation, with particular attention to species at risk.

Water resources are critical, including municipal and private systems. Protection of the Norwood municipal wells, rural wells, and groundwater resources associated with the Norwood Esker is essential. Consideration should also be given to potential impacts on the Trent River and the east and west branches of the Ouse River to ensure long-term water security.

Council emphasizes the importance of maintaining access to waterways for both emergency response and recreational use. Existing Township roads, trails, and access points should be preserved where possible, or appropriately replaced if disrupted. Recreational trails and open spaces contribute to the Township's rural character and local economy and should be accommodated in project design.

Council also requests that consideration be given to how municipal boundaries may be impacted, particularly in relation to long-term planning and service delivery.

Finally, Council emphasizes the importance of identifying and protecting Indigenous cultural sites, burial grounds, and rural cemeteries that may be affected by the proposed corridor.

Conclusion

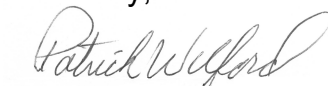
Council trusts that these comments are received in the constructive spirit in which they are offered. Our intent is to ensure that the perspectives of rural municipalities and residents are carefully considered as planning progresses.

As both proposed corridors pass through the Township of Asphodel-Norwood, Council respectfully requests that a future consultation session be held within our community so residents can review current information and engage directly with project representatives.

The Township of Asphodel-Norwood remains committed to working constructively with Alto and other levels of government to ensure that the impacts of this project on our community are carefully considered and appropriately addressed.

We hope municipalities will be engaged as meaningful partners throughout the planning process and that local governments will have an opportunity to contribute to discussions as the project advances.

Sincerely,



Patrick Wilford, Mayor

on behalf of the Council of the Township of Asphodel-Norwood

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