

## Enhancing Highway Connectivity

**Submitted by** the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Orillia Chamber of Commerce, Oro-Medonte Chamber of Commerce, Whitby Chamber of Commerce, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Richmond Hill Board of Trade

### Issue

Connecting Highways 400 and 404 is critical to supporting economic development in Ontario.

### Background

Highways 400 and 404 serve as backbones of Ontario's economy, together carrying all North/South traffic across the province.

The current lack of connectivity between these two highways is limiting Ontario's economic productivity. Whenever there is an accident that closes down the 400, all North/South movement of goods and people is disrupted for several hours.<sup>1</sup>

Congestion along Highway 400 is likely to increase considerably by 2041 as Simcoe and York regions experience explosive population and employment growth.<sup>2</sup> Appropriate transportation infrastructure is needed to support regional economic growth.

The Highway 400-404 Connecting Link is a proposed 16.2 kilometre, four-lane highway extension.<sup>3</sup> The project would result in a significant economic impact through reduced traffic congestion, more efficient transport of goods and services, faster access to airports, back-up options for emergency shut downs, and new employment and investment opportunities.

The reduction in delay costs associated with accidents alone would be significant, with each hour of delay costing an estimated \$25 per car and hundreds of accidents occurring along the 400 each year.<sup>4</sup>

The Connecting Link has passed Ontario's Environmental Assessment process. Prioritizing its completion is fundamental to Ontario's economic development.

### Recommendation

*The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:*

1. Complete the extension of Highway 404 to intersect with Highway 400 in Simcoe County by 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman, J., 2017, "Frustrated drivers trapped for hours after Hwy. 400 shut down for chemical spill," <https://www.cp24.com/news/frustrated-drivers-trapped-for-hours-after-hwy-400-shut-down-for-chemical-spill-1.3511876>.

<sup>2</sup> "Highway 400-404 Connecting Link," [http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/Government/Highway\\_400-404\\_Connecting\\_Link.htm](http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/Government/Highway_400-404_Connecting_Link.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Huen, K., Tighe, S., and McCabe, B, 2005, "Incorporating User Delay Cost in Project Selection: A Canadian Case Study," <http://www.civil.uwaterloo.ca/cpatt/AISIM/PAPERS/Paper%20-%20Huen,%20Ken.pdf>.