

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development, and Legislative Services
Community Planning

To: Regional Council
Meeting Date: June 21, 2023
Report Title: **Additional Access Request to Regional Road #58 (Fischer-Hallman Road) at 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road (Schlegel delegation response)**

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo declines the left-in, right-in, right-out access permit submitted by Schlegel Urban Developments on May 25, 2023, with the corresponding delegation on June 6, 2023, and direct staff to notify Schlegel Urban Developments that only a right-in, right-out access configuration will be permitted onto Regional Road #58 (Fischer-Hallman Road) at 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road, Kitchener.

2. Purpose / Issue:

This report has been prepared at the direction of the Planning and Works Committee in response to the delegation of Vaughn Bender representing Schlegel Urban Developments on June 6, 2023. The delegation followed an application for an access permit to Fischer-Hallman Road, seeking an additional southbound left-lane vehicle movement access to 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road. This request is in addition to the proposed right-in, right-out access on Fischer-Hallman Road, in combination with adjacent roundabouts that provide connections with Huron Road and Wallaceton Way, which offer full movement access on the North and South sides of the site. Staff have consistently indicated they would not support the additional southbound left vehicle access because it will degrade the capacity and safety of an essential economic, people-moving corridor and create further conflicts and safety concerns for active transportation users, discouraging active transportation.

3. Strategic Plan:

Managing access to the Regional Road system is integral to the development approval process. This report addresses the Region's Strategic Objective in Focus Area 2, Sustainable Transportation, by satisfying the following priorities:

- Improve traffic flow and better integration of roads
- Improve access to public transportation

- Enhance active forms of transportation such as walking, cycling and transit
- Improve infrastructure awareness so people can travel safely on all modes of transportation through the Region

4. Report Highlights:

- Since 2015, the design of the Fischer-Hallman Road corridor has been planned to be a roundabout corridor with private access points as right-in, right-out only
- The approved corridor design, with two lanes in either direction separated by a raised median and boulevard multi-use trails on either side, is supportive of mixed-use developments such as the one proposed by Schlegel Urban Developments
- Regional staff are recommending that the proposed access to 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road operate with right-in, right-out only traffic movements
- Given the close proximity to two roundabouts and two full movement access points to major collector roads on each side of the site, the site is well-served for access from all directions via automobile. For context, the added delay without the installation of a left-turn lane is less than 15 seconds
- Adding a left-turn movement at this access compromises:
 - Active transportation comfort and safety
 - The capacity and the flow of Fischer Hallman Road, the only major north-south arterial in the area
 - Ability to add transit priority on the Fischer Hallman Road corridor in the future

5. Background:

The site forms part of the plan of subdivision 30T-07205 (formerly Becker Estates), which was initially submitted in 2007 and draft approved by the former Ontario Municipal Board on December 15, 2009. The subject site is identified as Block 1, Stage 7 on the 68ha mixed-use plan, situated at the southeast quadrant of Fischer-Hallman and Huron Roads.

The planning and design of the Fischer-Hallman Road widening and the plans for the development progressed concurrently. Regional staff consistently indicated that a left-in access to Fischer-Hallman Road would not be supported while confirming that its design would include two roundabouts separated by less than 350m connecting to City streets with full access to the site.

The current site plan application (Kitchener SP/23/024/F/CD) will be developed in four phases and will consist primarily of commercial uses in Phase 1, including a grocery store. Phases 2, 3 and 4 are a mix of residential and commercial uses. In relation to the site plan, Schlegel Urban Developments submitted an application for an access permit on May 25, 2023.

6. Considerations:

Regional staff recommend that the proposed access to 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road operate with right-in, right-out only traffic movements.

The following principles form the foundation of access management on Regional roads. Additional details and descriptions of these principles can be found in the *Regional Road Access Guide*.

- Provide reasonable access to properties
- Maintain roadway safety through orderly management of conflict points
- Provide a well-connected multimodal access and circulation network
- Protect public investment and help foster a strong economy by preserving the functional integrity of public roads
- Support Regional growth management objectives and strategies

From the *“The Fischer-Hallman Road Urban Design Guidelines”* report, which included stakeholder participation from Glen Schlegel (RBJ Schlegel), the following was included *“A connected community is recommended. To achieve this while balancing the road’s functional requirements, the road should accommodate multiple access points to the adjacent communities with right in, right out intersections.”*

Technical Support for Right-in, Right-out Only Access along Fischer Hallman Road:

- Adding more conflict points across a multi-use path decreases pedestrian and cycling comfort and safety, thereby discouraging the use of the path
- Fischer-Hallman Road is the main arterial road in the area, and as such, people moving capacity needs to be a priority. Historical studies have suggested that Fischer-Hallman Road requires six general-purpose vehicle lanes. Regional guidelines have strongly discouraged building six-lane roads because of induced demand
- Every vehicle access added to a road increases collisions as conflict points increase. With more conflict points, road capacity is decreased (side friction)
- Access management on a corridor is necessary to reduce side friction to maintain through capacity. Businesses can be adversely impacted if a road is congested and challenging to navigate
- Access must be provided to businesses and homes, but access can be provided in a variety of ways (i.e. utilizing u-turns within roundabout corridors)
- This access recommendation aligns with the City of Kitchener’s Urban Design Manual (pages B-60/61), which states that *“right in/right out access to private developments are encouraged along Fischer Hallman Road subject to a Regional Road Access Permit”*
- Allowing accesses that are not required from a technical point of view is detrimental to the integrity and performance of the road in the future
- Adding a left-turn into the site will negatively impact the capacity and through

flow of this major north-south arterial and could pose safety concerns if left-turn traffic backs up into the through lanes immediately south of the Huron Road roundabout

- The left-turn compromises comfort and safety for users of the multi-use trail on a critical active transportation and transit corridor
- Left-turns across two opposing lanes and a multi-use path create multiple conflict points that generate a collision risk with vulnerable users (pedestrians, cyclists, scooters and wheelchairs) and discourage the use of the path
- The site is well served with a full access from the North (Huron Road) and the South (Wallaceton Way) and a potential right-in, right-out access at Fischer-Hallman Road

Current Status and Projected Impacts on the Fisher-Hallman Road Project

The 2010 Regional Transportation Master Plan identified the need for significant improvements along the Fischer-Hallman corridor, with a combination of widening, intersection/roundabout improvements, replacement of watermains, and enhanced pedestrian and cycling facilities. A municipal class environmental assessment study was initiated in March 2015, submitted to public consultation in June 2015, and approved by Regional Council in February 2016 (TES-DCS-16-05) around the principle of a four-lane urban cross-section with roundabouts, raised centre medians to prevent left turns between roundabouts and boulevard multi-use trails. The design of the Fischer-Hallman widening progressed in stages between 2017 and 2020, following this principle. The construction contract adjacent to the proposed access (the second of three planned contracts) was tendered and awarded in 2022. Construction started in 2022 and is scheduled for completion in 2023.

Staff recommends that no changes be made to the current construction contract associated with the second stage of the project, as there would be no cost savings in delaying the installation of concrete curbs versus installing the left-turn facility post-construction. The cost of temporary works, changes to the sequence of work and schedule adjustments outweigh the cost of any subsequent re-work that would be required.

7. Alternatives:

Should Regional Council consider any access scenario other than the staff-recommended right-in, right-out configuration, it is recommended that this matter be referred back to Regional staff for further review.

8. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public:

City of Kitchener staff has been consulted throughout the review of this application and indicated they would support any Regional decision on that matter. The recommendation from Regional staff is aligned with the City of Kitchener's Urban

Design Manual.

Site Plan approval is not a public process. The public was consulted on the background studies before the site plan submission.

9. Financial Implications:

All costs associated with any potential access change at 1950 Fischer-Hallman Road will be entirely at the developer's expense in accordance with an access agreement that includes reimbursement to the Region for these costs supported by financial security from the developer. Any additional costs related to the delay, design change, materials, and construction will be charged to the developer. It is therefore recommended that all permits and financial agreements be in place before the Region commences any construction on behalf of the developer.

10. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Regional staff's recommendation is for Schlegel Urban Developments to submit an application for a right-in, right-out only access permit.

11. Attachments:

Appendix A: Key Plan

Appendix B: Phasing Plan (from Schlegel Delegation)

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