



TOWNSHIP OF
Melancthon

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON ROAD SAFETY FOR HORSE & BUGGIES

SUMMARY REPORT



OVERVIEW

Over the past two years, there have been a series of significant collisions involving motor vehicles and horse and buggies in Melancthon. In response, the Township of Melancthon held an initial kick-off meeting with Mennonite leaders in May 2024 to examine how to make roadways safer for that community. Over the course of the discussion, there was general agreement that a broader meeting was required to bring all stakeholders to the table to address road safety. On October 24, 2024, the Township convened a public Town Hall in Horning's Mills with members of the Mennonite Community and general public, as well as representatives from the County of Dufferin, Township of Melancthon, Ontario Provincial Police (Dufferin Detachment), and Ministry of Transportation (MTO).

This report summarizes the discussion points and action items that arose from the October Town Hall. At a high level, three broad themes emerged from the discussion:

1. the status quo is no longer viable;
2. all parties have a role to play in making our roads safer for horse and buggies and other slow-moving vehicles, and;
3. tangible action must be implemented at the Township, County, and Provincial levels.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- **TOWNSHIP OF MELANCTHON:** James McLean, Deputy Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance. Councillor Bill Neilson shared the Land Acknowledgement Statement. Everyone around the table introduced themselves.
- **COUNTY OF DUFFERIN:** Scott Burns, Director of Public Works, provided an overview of the County’s initiative to make roads safer for all travelers, including horse and buggies. He noted that they are at the beginning stages of the public engagement. Bruce Hilborn said the County would like to better understand the problems before they can solve them.
- **ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE (OPP):** Mike DiPasquale, Inspector of the Dufferin OPP, advised that the OPP has a specific role to educate the public and will continue that dialogue. He made reference to another OPP engagement, the Anabaptist Farm, Home and Road Safety Advisory Committee,” which is comprised of health and safety professionals, law enforcement, MTO, Old Order Community Reps and others with a shared interest in road safety. The Terms of Reference was shared with Township Staff.
- **MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (MTO):** Cody Hammer, Enforcement Officer, explained his role as an Enforcement Officer, where he focuses on education and enforcement of the *Highway Traffic Act*.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The Mennonite Community (MC) shared insights on the routes and challenges they experience on County and Township roads.

- The MC remarked that roads in the County are "good overall".
- Highway 10 (between Shelburne and Dundalk) was identified as a preferred route, due to the wider shoulders. The MC shared that their horses operate better on gravel surfaces over paved ones.
- The busiest day of the week for horse and buggy travel is on Sundays, starting at 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The day consists of travel between church, socials and home. During this period, County Roads 2 and 9 experience higher volume of horse and buggies.
- The MC remarked that, on average, buggies have a five-foot wheelbase; with a team of horses, the vehicle stands six feet wide.
- Like any traveler, the MC select routes based on the shortest distance, except in the Spring when some roads may be soft and muddy.
- The MC noted that County and Township roads are too narrow and do not allow for their buggies to get all wheels completely off of the road. As a result, they have either straddled the pavement and shoulder, or are forced to use the traffic lanes. County staff advised that it is not possible in the immediate term to widen all roads due to cost considerations.
- The MC made specific reference to 5th Line in Melancthon, and that the road is too narrow for buggies and traffic.
- Due to the raised nature of the intersection at Highway 10 and County Road 17, buggies are prone to roll backwards when waiting at the stop sign.
- MTO shared that horse and buggies that cannot fit entirely on the shoulder must move the vehicle entirely into the road lane (as noted in the Ontario Farm Guide)
- The MC requested better signage on Township and County roads to warn motorists that they may encounter a horse and buggy.
- The MC noted that driver interactions are similar at intersections and within mid-block road sections
- The MC raised concerns about the MTO intersection in Dundalk (County Road 9 and Highway 10), where weight sensors are placed in the pavement to trigger the traffic lights. Participants said that the buggies are too light to change the lights and often have to wait until a motor vehicle drives over the sensor.

- The MC said that snow plow and heavy machine operators should not stop their vehicles when approaching horse and buggies. Large vehicles that stop abruptly can spook horses. Instead, it was advised that the operator proceed slowly and cautiously past the Mennonites.
- Dufferin County's current Standard Operating Procedure states that when approaching a horse and buggy from behind, Operators shall "maintain a safe distance from the Horse Drawn Carriage until they can pull off the road to allow maintenance equipment to pass safely" or when approaching an oncoming buggy "reduce speed and pass as far away as safely possible. Do not make any sudden motions."

The Mennonite Community, as well as government representatives, discussed potential solutions to enhance road safety through signage, updating policies, and education and awareness.

- The MC indicated that they would benefit from a government-developed brochure that clarifies how they should travel on roads, illuminate their vehicles, and other safety tips. This brochure could then be shared within the community and with horse and buggy manufacturers to ensure lighting is consistent on all carriages.
- The Deputy Mayor mentioned that there is also a need to finalize the County's education and awareness brochure that is meant to raise awareness among the general public of how to safely approach a horse and buggy.
- The MC expressed the need for more signage on County and Township roads (e.g., "Share the Road with Horse and Buggies" signs).
- The MC indicated that the Township of Wellesley has a "trigger post" at major intersections that allows Mennonites to push a button to change the traffic lights. This resolves the issue that buggies are not heavy enough to activate the sensor in the pavement. The MC requested whether this approach could be adopted at major intersections in Dufferin County where horse and buggies travel.
- MC believe roundabouts are a better and safer option than stop lights, as it keeps the traffic moving.
- The MC advised that buggies typically have a headlight, taillight, reflector and slow-moving sign. The MTO advised that the MC should consider including two lights on the back and reflective tape (recommend conspicuity tape that is used on the back of commercial vehicles), in the corners of the buggy to outline it for other motorists.

- It was recommended that government representatives contact horse and buggy manufacturers to discuss creating greater consistency in illumination.

Key considerations & potential action items

- The OPP indicated they are interested in engaging more with the Mennonites to identify specific roads that may require enhanced enforcement. It was suggested that the MC fill out a map where there are higher volumes of horse and buggies.
- The OPP indicated that they are willing to work with the Township, County and MC on social media posts and videos to help educate the public on how to safely approach horse and buggies.
- During capital planning, the Township and County should consider widening road shoulders, where feasible and practical.
- The Township and County should assess whether and where additional signage can be placed on their roads to warn motorists that the MC travel those roads.
- County representatives would like a contact name from the MC so that they can engage with that person to inform their vulnerable road user review.
- Regular contact between the MC, OPP, MTO, Township and County would be helpful to share information and build trust.
- The Township and County, together with the OPP, MTO and other partners, should consider how best to:
 - raise awareness among the general public on how to properly approach and pass horse and buggies
 - Work with the MC to improve the rules of the road, illumination best practices, etc.
- In order to define any County response, Dufferin staff will carry on with their vulnerable road user review, including further engagement with the MC community, that will be presented to County Council upon completion.



TOWNSHIP OF
Melancthon

TOWN HALL MEETING

Public Consultation on Road Safety for Horse & Buggies

Horning's Mills Community Hall
14 Mill Street, Melancthon, Ontario
Thursday October 24, 2024 6:00
p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

- **Township of Melancthon:** Deputy Mayor James McLean; Councillor Bill Neilson; Councillor Ruth Plowright; Denise Holmes, CAO/Clerk; Al Blundell, Chair and Melancthon Public Member of the Melancthon-Mono-Mulmur OPP Detachment Board
 - **County of Dufferin:** Scott Burns, Director of Public Works and County Engineer; Bruce Hilborn, Manager of Operations and Fleet; Andy Sant, Assistant Manager of Operations and Fleet
 - **Dufferin OPP:** Michael DiPasquale, Inspector – Detachment Commander; Sgt. Mark Quinton
 - **Ministry of Transportation:** Cody Hammer, Enforcement Officer
 - **Mennonite Community:** Eli Sherk; Alvin Martin; Ivan Martin; Levi Martin; Simeon Martin; Emerson Brubacher; George Martin; Amos Martin; Solomon; Paul; Reuben; Levi
-

AGENDA

- 6:00 p.m. Welcome & Introductions**
Led by James McLean, Deputy Mayor, Township of Melancthon
Land Acknowledgement Statement delivered by Bill Neilson, Councillor, Township of Melancthon
- 6:10 p.m. Overview of County's proposed approach** *Led by a County of Dufferin representative*
- 6:20 p.m. Overview of OPP's lessons learned**
Led by Michael Di Pasquale, Commander, Dufferin County Detachment, Ontario Provincial Police

6:35 p.m. Facilitated discussion – several questions are provided to frame the conversation:

Participants will be invited to provide insight on the following questions:

1. What are the primary destinations for horse and buggy operators when using public roadways?
2. What are the main purposes for travel on these roads?
3. Which routes are most preferred by these users, and why?
4. Are there specific times or days of the week when community members tend to travel more frequently?
5. What are the key challenges faced by horse and buggy operators while traveling on public roadways? (While some of these challenges may seem apparent, we are seeking further insight based on direct experience.)
6. Are there any regulations or restrictions that govern the design or operation of horse-drawn carriages in your community?
7. How do operators ensure that other drivers are aware of their presence on the road?
8. What safety precautions do members of your community take while traveling on public roadways?
9. How would you describe motorists' attitudes towards horse-drawn carriages?
10. Any other information, comments or context that can be provided?

7:45 p.m. Public Question Period (if necessary)

7:55 p.m.

Summary, next steps & wrap up

Led by Ruth Plowright, Councillor, Township of Melancthon

8:00 p.m. Adjourn