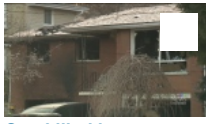


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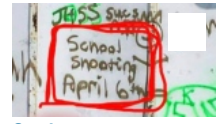
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Province to fast-track high-speed rail assessment

CTV Kitchener

Published Tuesday, March 6, 2018 8:37AM EST

Part of the proposed high-speed rail line along the Highway 401 corridor will undergo a sped-up environmental assessment process.

Environmental assessments are mandatory for public infrastructure projects in Ontario. They often take years.

When it comes to the province's high-speed rail line, though, part of the assessment could be done in as little as six months.

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Transportation Minister Kathryn McGarry says the high-speed rail line will use existing rail tracks between Toronto and Waterloo Region, allowing for an expedited planning process.

That won't be the case past Waterloo Region, as at least part of the London portion of the route will require new tracks being laid over what is currently farmland.

McGarry says the difference in EA processes won't stop the line from being ready to run by 2025 with stops at Union Station in Toronto, Pearson International Airport, Guelph Central Station, the new transit hub in Kitchener and in London. An extension to Chatham-Kent and Windsor is planned to be ready by 2031.

The province has estimated travel times of 48 minutes between Kitchener and Union Station, and 32 minutes between Kitchener and Pearson International Airport.

The cost of the high-speed rail line has been estimated at \$21 billion, with construction starting in 2022. The province is expected to seek funding help from the federal government and the private sector.

It was announced last month that David Collenette, the former federal transport minister who had been advising the province on high-speed rail, had been named the chair of a new planning advisory board for the project.

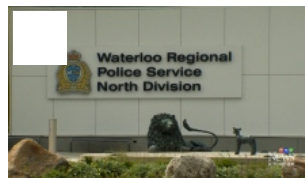
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