

# STAFF REPORT

**Department: Environmental Services and Special Project**

**Date: November 8, 2024**

**Item: Connecting Link Funding Application for 2025-2026**

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**Recommendation:** Be It Resolved That: Council for the Town of Espanola declares that:

- 1) The submitted application for 2025-2026 meets the requirements of the MTO's Connecting Links program as described in the Program Guide.
- 2) A comprehensive Asset Management Plan including connecting links has been completed and publicly posted.
- 3) The Municipality will comply with conditions that apply to designated connecting links under the Highway Traffic Act to ensure the safe and efficient movement of the provincial traffic;
- 4) The project put forward in the application will be completed and the milestones met as stated in the application; and
- 5) The application is complete and factually accurate.

**Background:**

- The Province has announced the roll out of the 2025-2026 Connecting Links Program. Deadline for applications is November 13, 2024.
- Staff require a resolution of Council to submit the funding application.
- The maximum amount of funding available is \$3,000,000.
- The province provides a \$30,000,000 fund for 77 municipalities to make application to access 90% of eligible costs for the replacement of connecting links projects. The maximum amount that any project can receive is \$3,000,000.

**Analysis:**

- This application is for the replacement of approximately 360 m section of highway from Foucault to Kei Will Drive and will complete the Connecting Link.

- At time of writing the staff report, the project estimation, on the high side, is approximately \$1,000,000 and \$62,000 of contract administration. The municipal portion with 90% funding would be \$106,200. Staff will provide a verbal update of the finalized budget at the Council meeting.
- For about the past decade, this section of highway has required maintenance on several occasions to restabilize bank erosion and repaving of the north bound lane to address severe wheel rutting and manage asphalt depressions from soil shifting.
- A Geotechnical review of the soils condition in the area completed in 2023 suggests that the soil shifting is likely due to localized migration of fill in combination with potential shifting of the rock fill layer over time and the brake loading of truck traffic. An evaluation of the shoulder stability was completed and determined that it was at low risk of giving way.
- Construction of this project would happen in the same year as the Connecting Link phase 4 project, (Tudhope to Station Road). Staff feel that both projects could be managed without negatively impacting traffic any more than the previous projects.

Construction for Phase 4 would commence in early spring, it has a low volume of watermain replacement and could potentially be paving by mid-August while if the municipality was successful in this application notice would be provided to the municipality by May-June. The process to commence phase 5 would involve tendering, council approval and contractor mobilization, work would likely start Mid August.

- Since there is no buried infrastructure like water, sewer, storm water, this project is largely a road base and asphalt project and is expected to take approximately 6-8 weeks to complete.
- Delaying an application until the 2026-2027 round will increase costs of the project further.
- This project is in line with our Strategic Plan.

**Existing Policy:** Application requires a Council Resolution



**Strategic Goal:** #3 infrastructure: That reliably serves existing and new development. # 6 Town Government: Effective Municipal Governance and operations.

**Financial Commitment:** Project total with contract administration is estimated at a \$1,062,000. The municipal portion after funding is approximately \$106,200 for the 2025 budgetary year.

**Budgeted:**    **Yes** ☐    **No** ☒

**Implementation:** Project would not proceed until 2025 pending approval of the grant.

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**CAO/Clerk: Joseph Burke**

**Approval of Recommendation:**   **Yes** ☒    **No** ☐

**Comments:**