

Transportation Environmental Study Report



Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment for the Development of a New Rest Centre on Highway 11 in the vicinity of Opatatika/Kapusksing, Ontario

G.W.P. 5133-22-00
Egis Project No.: CCO-24-2556

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TRANSPORTATION ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY REPORT

PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW REST CENTRE ON HIGHWAY 11 IN THE VICINITY OF OPASATIKA/KAPUSKASING, ONTARIO

G.W.P. 5133-22-00

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THE PUBLIC RECORD

This Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) has been prepared under the Ministry of Transportation’s Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities (2024) as a Group ‘B’ project, in accordance with the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*. It summarizes the preliminary design and environmental assessment process, describes existing environmental conditions, outlines proposed mitigation measures, and identifies commitments to future work.

The TESR is available for a 30-day public comment period from **March 5, 2026**, to **April 4, 2026**, on the project website: www.northernhighwayrestareas.com or in hard copy upon request. Comments received during this period will be reviewed by the Project Team and compiled—along with responses and any supporting materials—in a post-TESR Record of Consultation, which will be posted on the project website. Comments received after the 30-day period will not be included in the Record of Consultation but will be retained on file as part of the consultation record.

Responses to comments will be provided upon request. Comments can be submitted through the project website or directed to the contacts listed below.

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Individuals may request that the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) issue a Section 16 Order on the grounds that the order may prevent, mitigate, or remedy potential adverse impacts on Aboriginal or treaty rights. Requests not made on these specific grounds will not be considered. If a Section 16 Order request is submitted, the project cannot proceed until the MECP has made a decision. Requests must include: the requestor’s full name and contact information; the project name; the proponent’s name; the type of order being requested; detailed reasons explaining how the order may address adverse impacts on Aboriginal or treaty rights; information on any efforts made to resolve concerns directly with the proponent; and any other supporting information.

The request should be sent in writing or by email to the Ministry of Transportation Project Manager listed above and to:

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Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks

777 Bay Street, 5th Floor

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If you have accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact one of the Project Team members listed above. Information will be collected in accordance with *the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Except for personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

Des renseignements sont disponibles en français en composant 613-714-4586 (Patrick Leblanc).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA) study has been completed to determine the Preferred Alternative Location for a new rest centre on Highway 11 in the vicinity of Opatatika and Kapuskasing, Ontario, as part of G.W.P. 5133-22-00.

The consultation process for this study included a project website, direct mail (letters and OGNs), online news outlet notices, an online Public Information Centre, consultation with Indigenous communities, and meetings with individual stakeholders, the public, and external agencies. All comments received have been addressed.

The study followed the approved environmental planning process for Group ‘B’ projects under the 2024 Ontario Ministry of Transportation *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways*.

Preferred Alternative

Through the evaluation of multiple Alternative Locations, considering environmental, socio-economic, transportation, constructability, and cost factors, the Preferred Alternative location has been identified as Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land, located on Highway 11, east of the Opatatika Municipal Complex and west of the existing boat launch/picnic area at the Opatatika River. This location offers several key advantages:

- Best exposure to travelling public and proximity to preferred landmarks;
- Least impacts on sensitive natural environment;
- No private property impacts;
- Flat topography;
- Access to hydro/telecommunications on site;
- Access to municipal services (water and sanitary), and
- Lowest life cycle costs.

Environmental Impacts, Mitigation and Commitments to Future Work

While this site minimizes many impacts, certain environmental sensitivities will require mitigation during construction. These include impacts on terrestrial ecosystems, surface and groundwater, potential species at risk, traffic, noise, utilities, archaeology, and the management of excess soils. If mitigation measures outlined in this Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) are followed during detail design, environmental impacts are expected to be minimal.

Following a 30-day public comment period and 30-day MECP review period of the TESR, MTO can proceed to the detail design phase, in accordance with the 2024 MTO Class EA.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) completed a provincial-wide planning exercise to establish a rest area network across northern Ontario. The network plan identified future areas for development and opportunities to improve existing rest areas. The network plan provides descriptions of four rest area “classes” and site / facility design considerations including conceptual designs for each class.

Highway rest areas are public roadside facilities that provide motorists a safe place for a break from highway travel. Rest areas enhance safety through the following functions:

- Provide a stop to help mitigate driver fatigue,
- Help commercial vehicle drivers meet legislated hours-of-service regulations,
- Provide a safe location for drivers to assess current transportation conditions and make travel decisions,
- Provide a safe location for drivers to deal with emergencies, and
- Provide a safe location for drivers to make phone calls/texts or other forms of communication.

In April 2024, the MTO North Operations Office retained Egis to complete a preliminary design and class environmental assessment (Class EA) study for the development of a new rest centre on Highway 11 in the vicinity of Opatatika/Kapuskasing, Ontario under group work project (GWP) number: 5133-22-00.

The purpose of this Transportation Environmental Study Report (TESR) is to document the study and evaluation process for selecting the Preferred Alternative location for the new rest centre. The study has met the requirements of a Group ‘B’ project under the MTO’s *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways* (2024). The study included environmental and engineering field investigations as well as an extensive consultation program.

1.1 Study Area

The study area includes Highway 11 from approximately 3.3 km east of Ressor Road South to approximately McPherson Avenue. The study area is located within the Township of Opatatika, Township of Val Rita–Harty, and the Town of Kapuskasing, within the District of Cochrane (Figure 1).

Within the study area, Highway 11 generally traverses in an east–west direction and serves as a key regional transportation corridor, providing connectivity between the communities of Kapuskasing, Val Rita, Harty, and Opatatika, as well as to other northern communities. The

highway is currently configured as a two-lane, undivided roadway with at-grade access to adjacent properties.

Topographic conditions vary throughout the study area, reflecting a combination of low-lying areas, gently rolling terrain, and localized elevation changes. Land use adjacent to the highway is predominantly Crown land and natural areas, interspersed with residential properties and industrial and commercial uses, particularly in proximity to community centres and established access points.

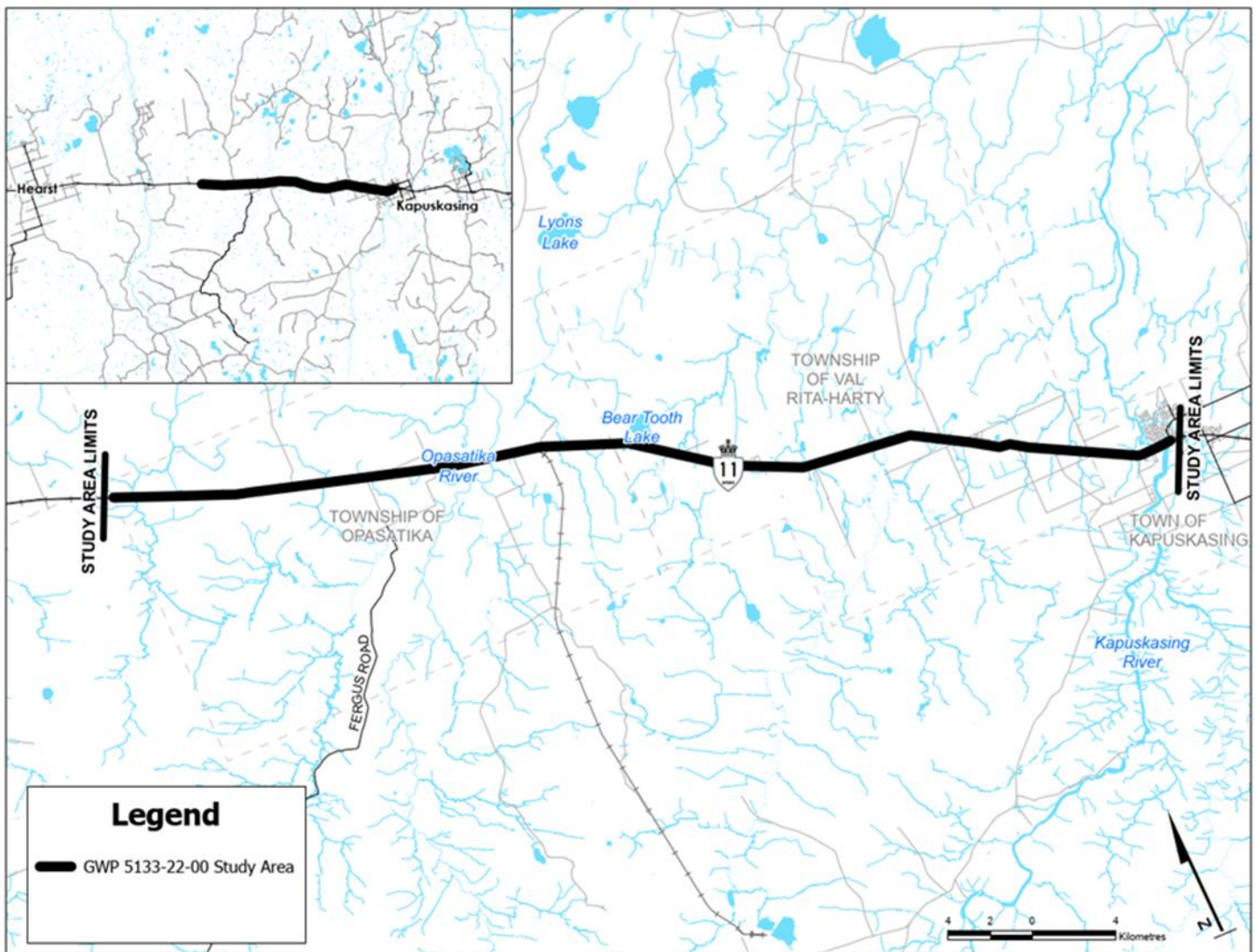


Figure 1: Study Area Key Plan

1.2 Purpose of the Transportation Environmental Study Report

The purpose of this TESR is to summarize the Class EA decision making process that was used during the study, including the evaluation process and consultation that was completed.

This TESR will document:

- An overview of the Environmental Assessment process,
- A summary of the previously completed Transportation Needs Assessment,
- Process for the selection and evaluation of alternative locations,
- An overview of existing environmental conditions,
- A summary of the consultation program, and
- Proposed mitigation measures and commitments to future work.

This TESR fulfills the documentation and consultation requirements of the Class EA process for a Group 'B' project under the MTO's *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways (2024)*

If any significant design modifications or changes that result in environmental impacts that were not identified in the TESR are made to the project following the completing of the TESR, a TESR Addendum may be required to document the project changes.

1.3 Completion of Class EA

Following completion of the 30-day TESR public review period, the project is subject to a further 30-day waiting period, during which the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks may issue a Section 16 Order under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. If no Section 16 Order is issued by the end of this period, the Class Environmental Assessment requirements are considered satisfied and the project may proceed to detail design and construction, subject to any other applicable approvals.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The planning and design of MTO provincial transportation projects follows an approved Provincial Class EA process that has been in place and updated regularly since 1979. The document titled, ‘Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways’, was approved under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act) in the fall of 1999 (amended in 2000, 2020, 2023 and 2024). The Class EA process is a principal-based approach rather than prescriptive in nature. This means that the Class EA defines what must be achieved, rather than defining precisely how it should be done. Provided the process is followed, projects included under the Class EA do not require formal review and approval under the EA Act.

The MTO Class EA planning process classifies projects into activity ‘groups’ with a primary focus on consultation and environmental documentation. The groups are as follows:

- Group A projects are new provincial transportation facilities and highway/freeway realignments, and new municipal expressway facilities and municipal expressway realignments;
- Group B projects modify access or add capacity to existing provincial transportation facilities or municipal expressways, and new service/maintenance/operations facilities;
- Group C projects are improvements to existing provincial transportation facilities or municipal expressway facilities, and
- Group D projects are the operation, maintenance, administration and miscellaneous work required to facilitate the provincial transportation system.

Certain projects are exempt from the EA Act in accordance with the provisions of Section 15.3(1) and (2) of the EA Act.

The Class EA outlines principles and processes that must be followed for applicable projects, including consultation, development and evaluation of alternatives, and documentation. Public participation and consultation with property owners and other interested parties is a significant element of the decision-making process. The commitments to mitigate potential environmental impacts of the project work were made available to external agencies and stakeholders through the public consultation process.

2.1 MTO Class EA Study Process

The Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways (2024) is a phased planning and design process that is completed at the preliminary design stage. The Class EA process includes problem/opportunity identification, development and evaluation of alternatives, and consultation, culminating in the preparation of a TESR.

For this project, the Class EA planning process is being carried out in accordance with the 2024 Class EA and will be completed at the preliminary design stage. Following completion of the Class EA process and the applicable review period, the project will proceed to detail design and construction, which will be undertaken outside of the Class EA process and in accordance with the approved preliminary design and commitments documented in the TESR.

Where changes to the project are identified following the completion of the TESR that do not alter the approved project scope or the conclusions of the environmental assessment, an Errata to the TESR and/or a Post-TESR consultation summary may be prepared and placed on the public record in accordance with the 2024 Class EA. If changes are identified that may result in new or increased environmental effects, additional consultation and documentation may be required in accordance with the Class EA.

Refer to **Figure 2** for an overview of the Class EA process.

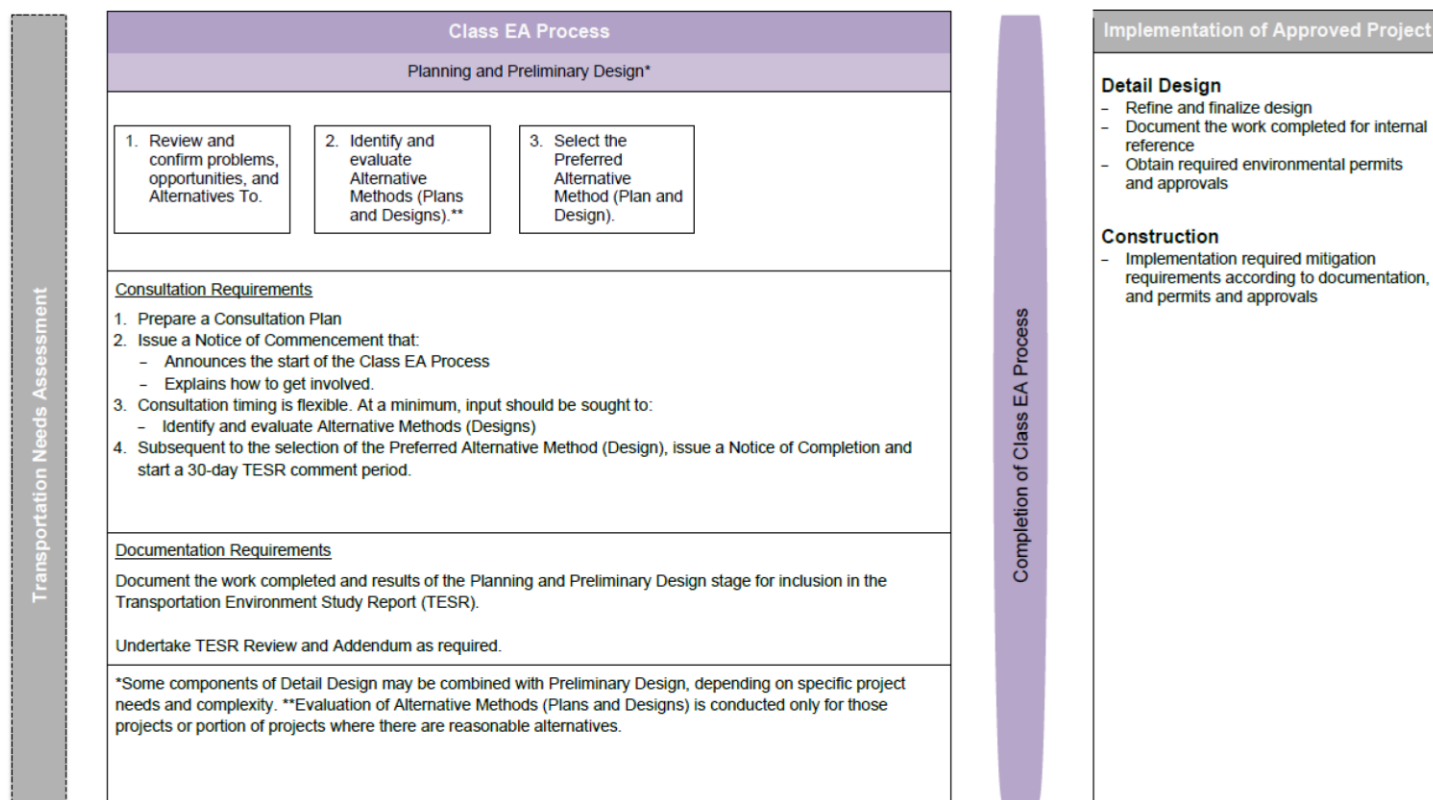


Figure 2: Overview of Class EA Process (2024) for Group 'B' Projects

2.2 Impact Assessment Act

On August 28, 2019, the *Impact Assessment Act* (IAA) replaced the former *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA). The IAA outlines a process for assessing the impacts of major projects and projects carried out on federal lands or outside of Canada.

Impact assessment is a planning and decision-making tool used to assess the positive and negative environmental, economic, health, and social effects of proposed projects and impacts to Indigenous groups and rights of Indigenous peoples.

The projects and activities that are subject to the IAA are very similar to those that were subject to an environmental assessment under the CEAA, 2012. The Project List focuses federal impact assessments on projects that have the most potential for adverse environmental effects in areas of federal jurisdiction. However, some changes have been made to the “Project List”, such as new thresholds or projects have been introduced or increased. Under the IAA, only those projects designated by the Physical Activities Regulations or designated by the MECP on a discretionary basis may be subject to federal environmental assessment. This study is not subject to the IAA.

3.0 TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

3.1 Problem and Opportunity

Northern Ontario currently has few designated locations where public and commercial drivers can safely stop and rest along major highways. **Figure 3** from the MTO’s Northern Rest Area Guide highlights the points along key routes—such as those originating in Winnipeg, Brampton/Mississauga, and Montreal—where long-haul commercial drivers typically reach their 13-hour daily travel limit. Along Highway 11, the corridor between Hearst and Cochrane has been identified as a long-distance travel route where drivers typically approach their daily hours-of-service limits and as lacking sufficient facilities for safe, long-duration commercial vehicle parking.

The need for a new rest centre within the proposed study limits has been identified to address a significant concern related to road safety, driver fatigue, and the overall experience for both the travelling public and commercial operators in Northern Ontario.

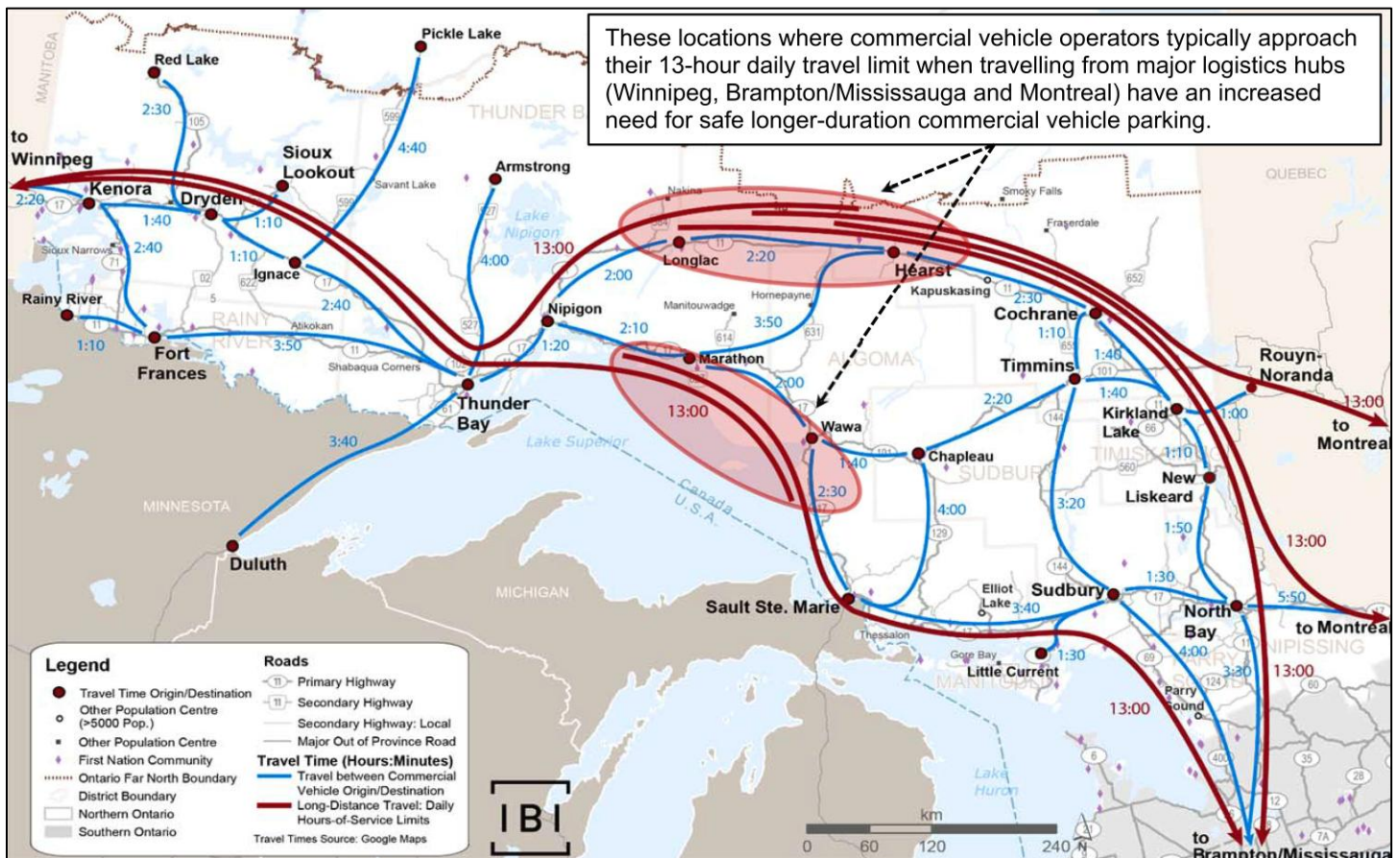


Figure 3: Parking Needs for Longer Duration Commercial Vehicles

3.2 Alternatives to the Undertaking

The Northern Ontario Highway Rest Areas Design and Implementation Guidance, (November 2018) (*Northern Rest Area Guide*) is a valued resource with many specific details related to these design locations. The rest centre design concept shown in **Figure 4** presents the starting point of the design process and was the basis for the alternatives presented in this TESR.

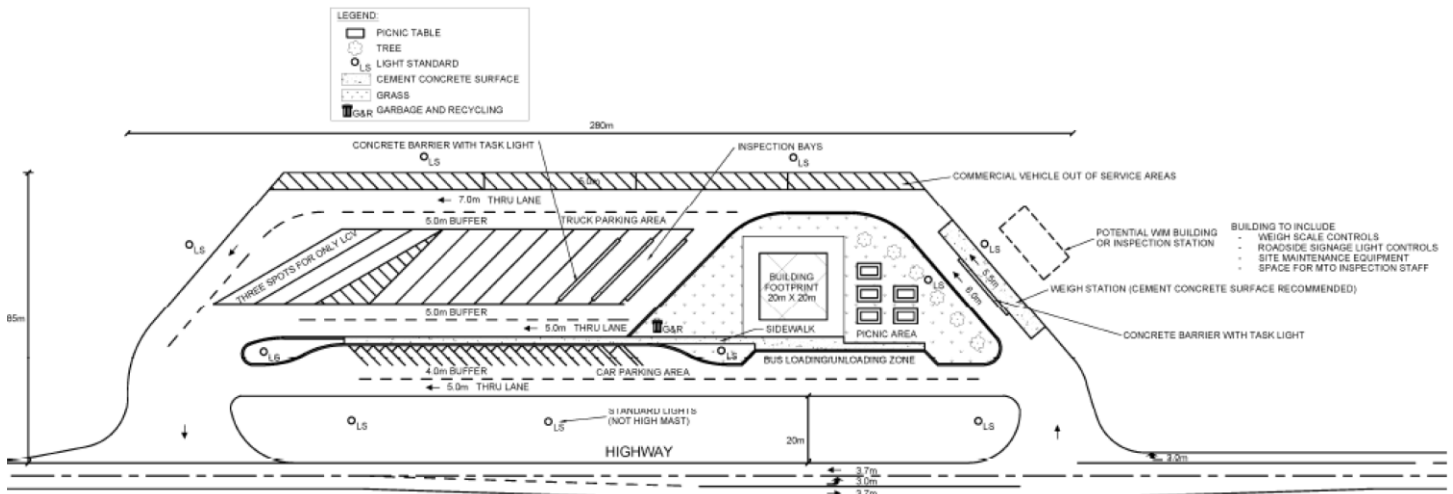


Figure 4: MTO's Conceptual Rest Centre Layout Incorporating Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Activities

The guidelines speak to rest centres specifically and is followed in great detail implementing all guidance recommendations into this assignment specifically: water/wastewater, power/heating, building design features and amenities, building placement, entrances, accessibility, washrooms, various communications, local art, and Electric Vehicle Charging. As noted, these reference documents provide a significant amount of information and guidance when providing designs meeting the Ministry's and the travelling public's needs.

4.0 SELECTION AND EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Egis examined the study area to identify potential locations for a new rest centre. Each potential site was initially assessed on its individual merits through a coarse screening, resulting in a long list of potential alternative locations. These findings were documented in a Long List Memorandum, which identified nine (9) sites within the study area that could feasibly accommodate the proposed rest centre.

Following a comprehensive assessment, including desktop analyses and in-person site visit, the long list was refined. This process culminated in the preparation of a Short List Report, which identified four (4) candidate locations for further detailed assessment. Conceptual designs and site layouts were then developed for each site, in accordance with applicable design guidelines described in **Section 3.2**.

The short list was subjected to a detailed evaluation using the Weighted Additive Method, also known as the Multi-Attribute Trade-Off System (MATS). This process identified a Preferred Alternative, which was subsequently presented to the public through an online Public Information Centre (PIC).

4.1 Coarse Screening

The coarse screening exercise reviewed the full extent of the study area to eliminate areas that have significant negative impacts in comparison to others. A long list of potential rest centre site locations were selected within the study area using Geographic Information System (GIS) layers of a variety of environmental and land use constraints, including:

- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
 - Watercourses and waterbodies (30 m buffer)
 - Wetlands (30 m buffer)
 - Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs)
 - Provincial parks
 - Indigenous communities (First Nations' lands were excluded)
- Topography
 - Based on 10 m contour data from Ontario GeoHub
- Hydro Transmission Corridors
 - Avoidance of sites with existing major transmission infrastructure
- Site Location Considerations
 - Accessibility from both directions on two-lane highways
 - Preference for straight stretches of highway (not curves)
 - Separation from side roads and intersections
 - Avoidance of introducing new acceleration/deceleration lanes within communities

- Minimization of impacts to nearby residences (e.g., noise from engine brakes or idling trucks)
- Avoidance of active agricultural lands where possible
- Good visibility from the highway, with appropriate set-back and grade alignment
- Preference for previously developed land
- Space available for outdoor picnic and pet exercise areas
- Site Servicing Potential
 - Sufficient site size to accommodate planned uses
 - Access to or feasibility of hydro servicing
 - Potential for connection to municipal services

Based on the criteria and factors noted above, nine (9) long list alternatives were identified within the study area limits of GWP 5133-22-00. The nine (9) long list alternatives are illustrated on **Figure 5**.

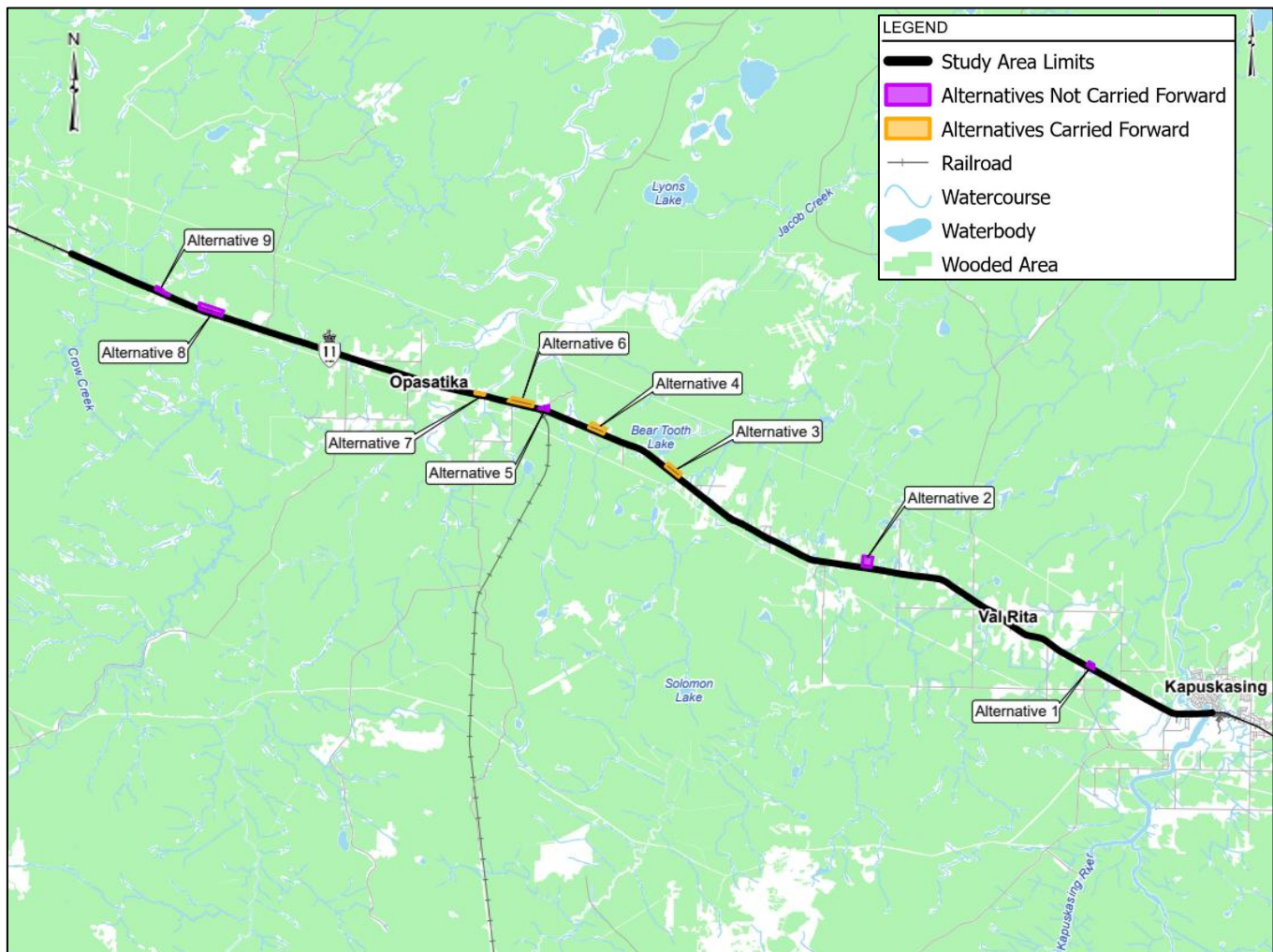


Figure 5: Long List of Alternatives

4.2 Long List Alternatives Evaluation

Following the coarse screening, the long list of alternative sites was evaluated using the Reasoned Argument method. This approach involved comparing the relative impacts of each site and providing a clear rationale for the selection of shortlist candidates. Shortlisting the long list allows the project team to focus efforts on the most viable options, supporting the identification of the Preferred Alternative.

Long list alternatives were assessed based on the following criteria: technical considerations, natural environment, social and cultural environment, transportation, and implementation risks. As a result of this evaluation, four (4) sites were shortlisted for more detailed assessment, as documented in the Long List Evaluation Report (**Appendix A**):

Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property (Figure 6)

Located on the north side of Highway 11 approximately 8.5 km east of Opatatika and situated on a mix of Crown land and private property, this site is currently vacant and forested. This site is located on a straight stretch of Highway 11 which would allow for positive sightlines, site access, and turning movements. This site could accommodate widening required for the addition of left turn lanes without impacting major drainage infrastructure or the rail line located to the south. The site is located partially on Crown Land and partially on private property and therefore would require partial acquisition from a private landowner. There is plenty of available space for the incorporation of well/septic, SWM facilities, as well as excess soil management areas. The topography of the site appears acceptable with limited cut/fill requirements. There is hydro and telecom nearby that could service the new rest centre.



Figure 6: Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property

Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property (Figure 7)

Located on the north side of Highway 11 approximately 5.0 km east of Opatatika and situated on a mix of Crown land and private property, this site is currently vacant and forested with evidence of historical use as a logging access road. This site is located on a straight stretch of Highway 11 which would allow for positive sightlines, site access, and turning movements. Highway 11 at this location could accommodate widening required for the addition of left turn lanes without impacting major drainage infrastructure or the rail line located to the south. There is an existing entrance/exit from a former logging road for large vehicles at this site where utilities have been moved underground. As this site was previously connected to a logging road, the public would be familiar with seeing large vehicles entering/exiting this location and it is unlikely local residents would have concerns with noise generated from a rest area. The site is located partially on Crown Land and partially on private property (that does not appear to have an existing residential dwelling) and therefore would require partial acquisition from a private landowner. There is plenty of available space for the incorporation of well/septic, SWM facilities, as well as excess soil management areas. The topography of the site appears acceptable with limited cut/fill requirements. There is hydro and telecom nearby that could service the new rest centre.

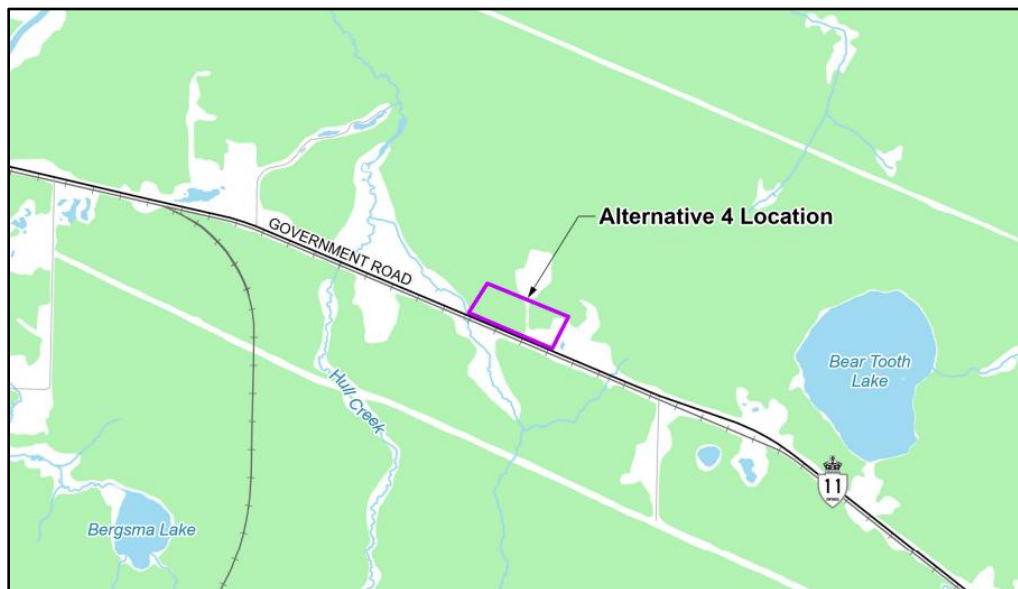


Figure 7: Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property

Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property (Figure 8)

Located on the north side of Highway 11 approximately 1.6 km east of Opatatika and situated on a mix of Crown and private property, this site is currently vacant and forested with evidence of historical use as a logging access road. This site is located on a straight stretch of Highway 11 which would allow for positive sightlines, site access, and turning movements. Highway 11

at this location could accommodate widening required for the addition of left turn lanes without impacting major drainage infrastructure or the rail line located to the south. There is an access road to a waste management facility on the south side of Highway 11, so it is assumed the public is familiar with seeing large vehicles entering and exiting Highway 11 in this area. The site is located partially on Crown Land and partially on private property and therefore would require partial acquisition from a private landowner. There is plenty of available space for the incorporation of well/septic, SWM facilities, as well as excess soil management areas. The topography of the site appears acceptable with limited cut/fill requirements. There is hydro and telecom nearby that could service the new rest centre. A snowmobile trail is located in the northern limits of the site which may allow for a rest area in this location to serve a dual purpose for the local community (i.e., allow trail users to park vehicles/use washrooms, etc.).



Figure 8: Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property

Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land (Figure 9)

Located on the north side of Highway 11 east of the Opatatika Municipal Complex and west of the existing boat launch and picnic area at the Opatatika River and situated on a mix of Crown land and Municipality of Opatatika Land, this site is currently undeveloped and cleared. This site is located on Highway 11, east of the Opatatika Municipal Complex and west of the existing boat launch/picnic area at the Opatatika River. Sightlines, site access, and turning movements are positive in both directions, with a reduced speed area beginning at the west end of the site. There are existing taper and slip-around lanes for access to the boat launch/picnic area, which could accommodate the additional widening required for the addition of left-turn lanes without impacting major drainage infrastructure or the rail line located to the south. There are municipal water and sewer connections available for the site. There is

ample space to incorporate stormwater management (SWM) facilities, as well as areas for excess soil management, if required. Hydro and telecom services are located nearby and could service the new rest centre. A snowmobile trail is located at the northern limits of the site, which may allow the rest area to serve a dual purpose for the local community (e.g., provide parking, washrooms, etc. for trail users). The Municipality of Opatatika has expressed a strong desire to locate the proposed rest centre at this location.

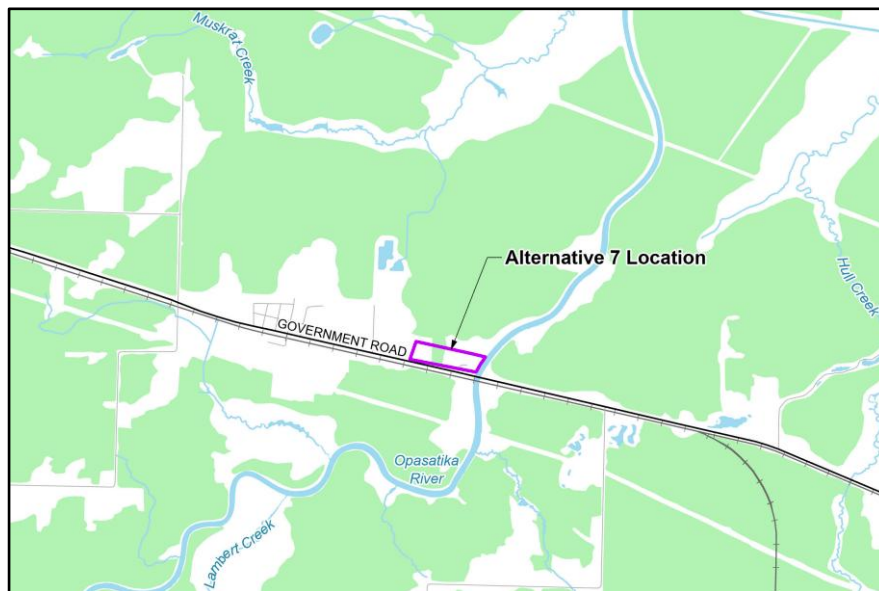


Figure 9: Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land

4.3 Short List of Alternatives Evaluation and Selection of the Preferred Alternative

For evaluating the short list of alternatives, the use of the “Weighted Additive Method”, also known as the Multi-Attribute Trade-Off System (MATS), was applied.

MATS is used for the evaluation of alternatives where there are many choices and a large number of competing criteria, so a more comprehensive approach is followed. This is because it is difficult to distinguish between the alternatives when the number of competing trade-offs increases, that is, the complexity of the comparisons increases. As an initial step, a list of assessment factors and subfactors is determined for each set of alternatives. Only those factors and subfactors where there are measurable differences among the alternatives, which can influence the evaluation, are detailed in the assessment tables.

The evaluation process was undertaken quantitatively based on the following broad assessment factors:

- Natural Environment,
- Socio-Economic Environment,

- Transportation,
- Constructability, and
- Cost.

The component categories allowed the generation of evaluation criteria relative to study-specific engineering, socio-economic and environmental concerns. The component categories were classified into further sublevels. These sublevels included the factors (as noted above) and subfactor groups.

The results of the weighted evaluation identified the preferred preliminary design alternative as *Alternative 7 – Crown Land/ Municipality of Opatatika Land (Figure 10)*. The key benefits of this alternative include:

- Site has best exposure to travelling public and proximity to preferred landmarks;
- Least impacts on sensitive natural environment;
- No private property impacts;
- Flat topography;
- Access to hydro/telecommunications on site;
- Access to municipal services (water and sanitary), and
- Lowest life cycle costs.

As shown on **Figure 10**, proposed amenities for the new rest centre include:

- Accessible, 24-hour heated washroom facilities with potable water, flush toilets and electrical outlets for cell phone charging;
- Picnic area;
- Tractor trailer parking spots, and
- Passenger vehicle parking spots.

Additional information regarding the weighting and sensitivity testing for the MATS evaluation is available in the *Short List Evaluation Report (Appendix B)*.

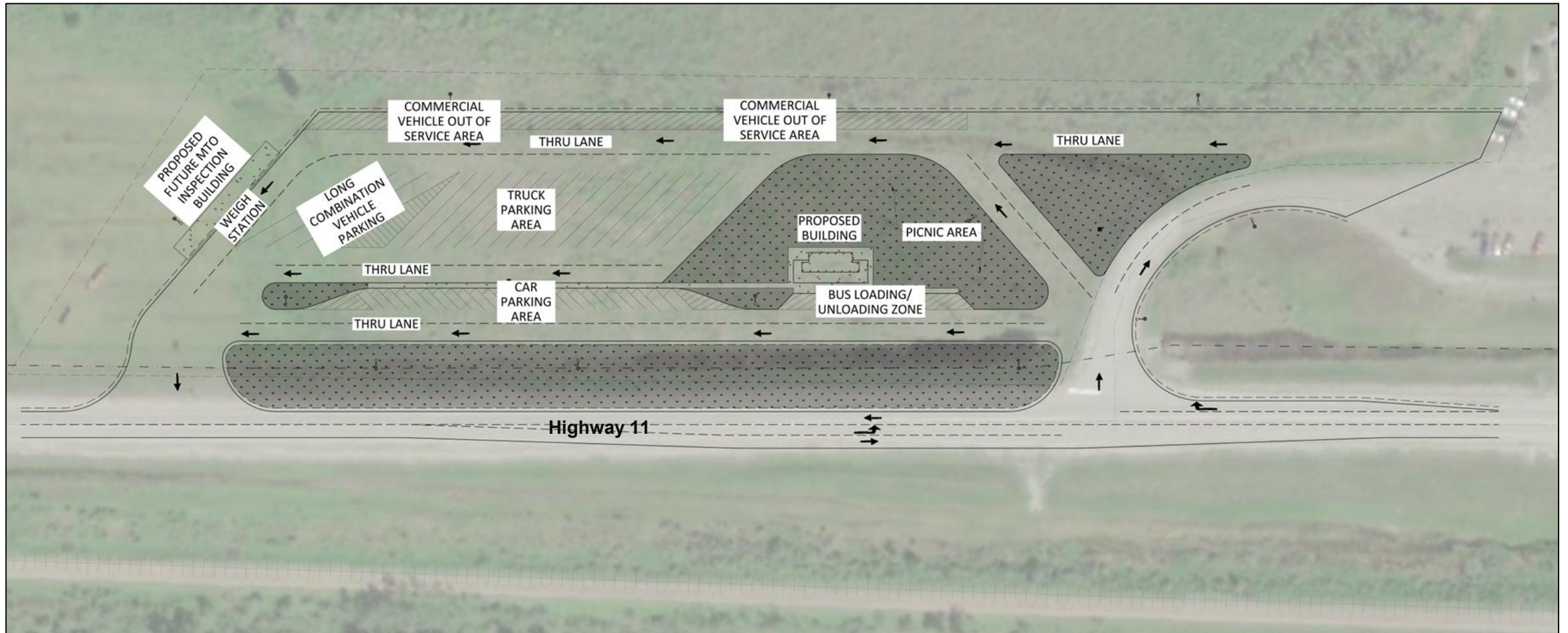


Figure 10: Alternative 7 – Crown Land/ Municipality of Opatatika Land

5.0 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Existing environmental (natural, social, economic, cultural and built environments) conditions at the Short List Alternative locations were further studied to identify potential impacts (both direct and indirect) as a result of construction of the proposed new rest stop.

5.1 Fish and Fish Habitat

As part of the Long List of Alternatives screening process, properties containing and adjacent to watercourses and lakes were not carried forward for further review or consideration, unless the property was significant enough to be able to maintain an appropriate buffer from the rest centre development to the environmentally sensitive features (i.e., >30m from watercourses). As these elements were screened out, no further evaluation was completed in this regard on the Short List of Alternative sites.

5.2 Terrestrial Ecosystems

Field investigations were conducted to collect information related to terrestrial ecosystems within the study area and at the Short List Alternative locations. The following is a summary of terrestrial ecosystems' characteristics at each Alternative:

Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property

- Habitat Type: Multiple woodland habitat types including a black spruce forest; a mixed forest comprised of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*); a mixed conifer forest dominated by jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), black spruce (*Picea mariana*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), and tamarack; and a different mixed forest type with black spruce, trembling aspen, and tamarack.
- Ground Conditions: Low laying woodland that is wet in nature. Sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and wild parsnip (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) – all invasive species – were observed on the site.
- Topography: Moderate fluctuations of topography across the site.
- Ecological Features:
 - Potential habitat suitable for woodland Species at Risk (SAR).
- Nearby Wetlands/Water: Soloman Creek is just south of the highway within 100 m.
- Constraints:
 - Candidate SAR habitat.

Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property

- Habitat Type: A mixed forest made up of trembling aspen, tamarack, and black spruce, and a mixed conifer forest with the same dominant species but distinctly more conifer dominant. In addition, a cattail marsh that is 0.25 ha in size and dry open meadow that has been previously disturbed with some exposed rock barren areas are present. The

western section of the site is wetland riparian habitat due to the proximity to Duclos Creek.

- Ground Conditions: Portions of wetland and marsh ground cover. Sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) – both invasive species – were observed on the site.
- Topography: Moderate fluctuations of topography across the site.
- Ecological Features:
 - Contains exposed rock barren areas.
 - Contains riparian habitat.
 - Potential habitat suitable for grassland SAR, woodland SAR, and Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*).
- Nearby Wetlands/Water: Duclos Creek and associated wetland are present 90 m west and a small wetland is present within 50 m from the eastern boundary.
- Constraints:
 - Candidate SAR habitat.

Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property

- Habitat Type: Multiple mixed woodlands including a poplar dominant mixed forest and a mixed forest comprised of trembling aspen, tamarack, and black spruce. In addition, open meadow habitat is present.
- Ground Conditions: Sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and wild parsnip (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) – all invasive species – were observed on the site.
- Topography: Moderate fluctuations of topography across the site.
- Ecological Features:
 - Potential habitat suitable for woodland SAR.
- Nearby Wetlands/Water: An unidentified wetland is present directly to the east and Opatatika River is present 950 m to the west.
- Constraints:
 - Candidate SAR habitat.

Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land

- Habitat Type: Predominantly shrub woodland with conifer woodland.
- Ground Conditions: Wetland areas present.
- Topography: Low fluctuations of topography across the site.
- Ecological Features:
 - Potential habitat suitable for shrubland SAR and forest SAR.
- Nearby Wetlands/Water: Opatatika River is present approximately 180 m east of the site and an unevaluated wetland is present on the northwest portion of the site

- Constraints:
 - Candidate SAR habitat.

Additional details can be found in the *Terrestrial Existing Conditions Report*, prepared by Egis dated July 31, 2025 (**Appendix C**).

5.3 Noise

A Preliminary Screening for Noise Sensitive Areas adjacent to the short-listed Alternatives Sites was conducted in accordance with MTO Noise Guidelines:

Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property

- Four (4) noise receptors identified, all residential houses approximately 100 m north of the site.

Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property

- One (1) noise receptor identified, a residential house approximately 100 m south of the site.

Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property

- One (1) noise receptor identified, a structure which may be a residence approximately 250 m east of the site.

Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land

- Multiple noise receptors identified, all residential houses approximately 160 m west of the site.

Additional details can be found in the *Memorandum: MTO Rest Centres Class Environmental Assessment (MTO 5023-E-0006), Opatatika/Kapuskasing – White River – Wawa, Preliminary Design – Environmental Noise*, prepared by RWDI dated March 7, 2025 (**Appendix D**).

5.4 Air Quality

A Preliminary Air Quality Assessment was conducted for the Alternatives Sites in accordance with applicable air quality criteria and MTO guidelines:

Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property

- Four (4) receptors identified, all residential houses approximately 100 m north of the site.

Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property

- One (1) receptor identified, a residential house approximately 100 m south of the site.

Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property

- One (1) receptor identified, a structure which may be a residence approximately 250 m east of the site.

Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land

- Multiple receptors identified, all residential houses approximately 160 m west of the site.

Additional details can be found in the *Memorandum: MTO Rest Centres Class Environmental Assessment (MTO 5023-E-0006), Opatatika/Kapuskasing – White River – Wawa, Preliminary Design – Air Quality*, prepared by RWDI dated March 7, 2025 (**Appendix E**).

5.5 Existing Land Use

As illustrated in **Figure 11**, existing land uses at all alternatives are identified as natural areas/open space.

Additional details can be found in the *Land Use Report*, prepared by Egis dated February 27, 2025 (**Appendix F**).

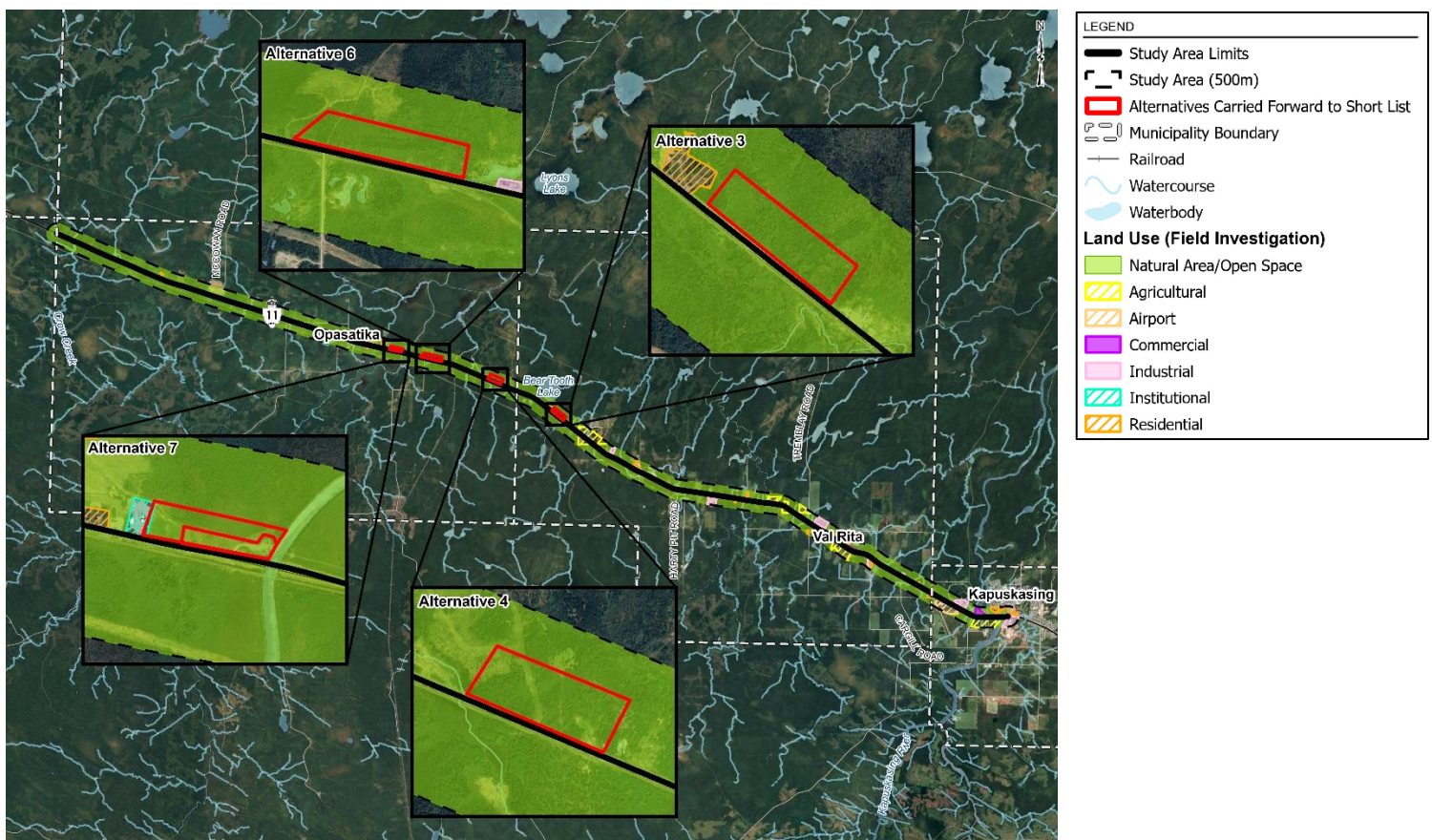


Figure 11: Land Use Mapping

5.6 Contamination and Waste Management

Egis undertook a Contaminated Property Identification and Waste Management Assessment to provide a preliminary background review. The results of Environmental Risk Information Services Ltd. (ERIS) identified possible sources of contamination. **Table 1** summarizes the possible sources of contamination at each short-listed alternative:

Table 1: Possible Sources of Contamination	
Alternative	Possible Sources of Contamination (On- and Off-Site)
3	<p>Potential fill of unknown quality related to construction of highway infrastructure present west-adjacent to the site and assumed present along southwestern site boundary.</p> <p>Salt use during winter conditions along highway infrastructure located upgradient from the Site.</p>
4	<p>Fill material of unknown quality associated with the gravel roadway and parking areas on-site and related to construction of highway infrastructure present west-adjacent to the site and assumed present along southwestern site boundary.</p> <p>Potential asbestos containing materials within potential on-site building.</p> <p>Salt use during winter conditions along highway infrastructure located west-adjacent and down to cross gradient from the site.</p>
6	<p>Fill material of unknown quality associated with two on-site gravel roadways and potential fill of unknown quality present along Highway 11, south of the site.</p> <p>Salt use during winter conditions along Highway 11, adjacent to the site</p>
7	<p>Fill material of unknown quality associated with on-site gravel parking area and boat launch and potential fill of unknown quality present along Highway 11, south of the site.</p> <p>Salt use during winter conditions along Highway 11, adjacent to the site and community land use west of the site.</p>

Additional details can be found in the *Contaminated Property Identification & Waste Management Assessment Report*, prepared by Egis dated July 15, 2025 (**Appendix G**).

5.7 Cultural Heritage

A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment was conducted to identify known or potential built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes within and adjacent to the study area.

The results of a preliminary impact assessment for each Alternative concluded that no cultural heritage resources were identified for any site.

Additional details can be found in the *Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment Report*, prepared by Northwest Archaeological Assessments Ltd. dated November 2025 (**Appendix H**).

5.8 Archaeology

A Preliminary Screening for Archaeological Potential was conducted by a licensed archaeologist (Past Recovery Archaeology) for each of the Short List Alternatives locations, as shown on **Figure 12**. An Archaeological Screening Memo was prepared and included in **Appendix I**. A Project Information Form (PIF) Number (P1074-0182-2024) has been issued for a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment for this project. In accordance with the terms and conditions of archaeological licences, the information contained in the screening memo will be incorporated into a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment report and submitted to the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism (MCM) for review.

A Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment for the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 7 - Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land) is anticipated. A PIF Number (PIF P1074-0252-2025) has been issued for this project.

Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property: Apart from the buffer from the railway, this property lies beyond buffers from features indicating archaeological potential.

Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property: While the western end of this property has been mapped as wetland - indicating low archaeological potential - and there are corridors or pockets of deep disturbance, large sections lie within the buffer zones of the wetland, railway, and former farm structures in the clearing to the north, which would require a Stage 2 assessment.

Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property: Apart from the buffer from the railway and small pockets within wetland buffers along the northern edge, this property lies beyond buffers from features indicating archaeological potential.

Alternative 7 - Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land: While the northeastern end of this property has been mapped as wetland indicating low archaeological potential and there are corridors of deep disturbance, large sections lie within buffers from the wetland, the railway, which would require Stage 2 assessment.

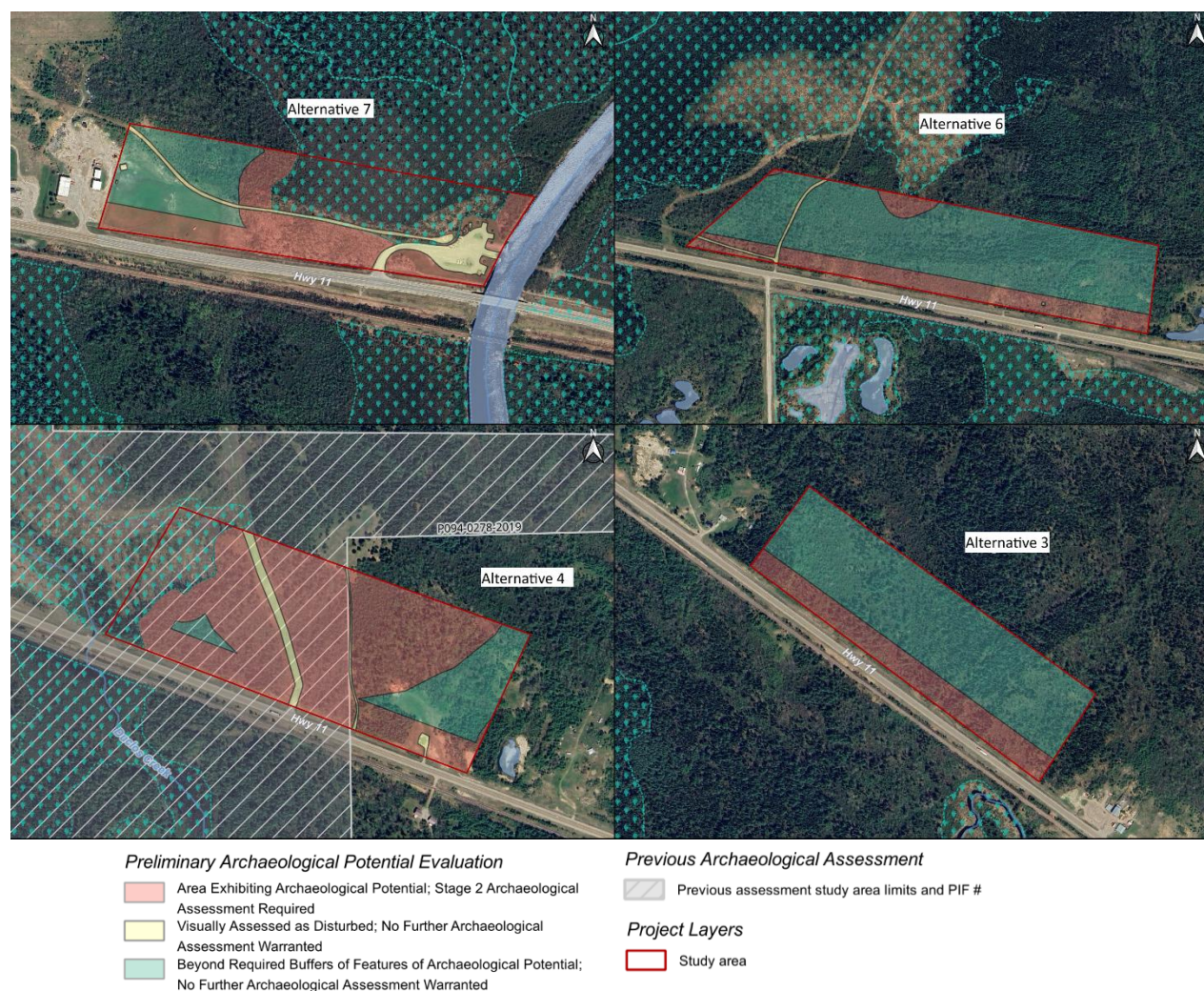


Figure 12: Archaeological Potential Mapping

Additional details can be found in the Archaeological Screening Memo, prepared by Past Recovery Archaeology, dated May 2025 (**Appendix I**).

5.9 Transportation

Highway 11 has a posted speed of 90 km/h throughout most of the study area, with the speed limit reduced to 60km/h approximately 450 m west of the Opatatika River Bridge, within the frontage of Alternative 7. The mainline is two lanes approximately 3.9 m wide, one per direction, traveling generally southeast and northwest. Throughout the corridor there are left and right turning lanes at multiple side roads and entrances and passing lanes.

5.10 Traffic

The traffic study area extends 500 m in both directions from the proposed rest area locations. Traffic data was obtained from the MTO in the form of Projected Volume Data Memorandums,

seasonal 7-day Automated Traffic Recorder counts, Turning Movement Counts and collision data reports. All options illustrate a collision rate below the provincial average of 0.7 for Kings Highways.

Egis performed a desktop review of the available sightlines for the proposed site accesses. The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (GDG), June 2017, was used to determine the required sight distance. All locations are within the acceptable limits for sightlines. However, specific locations within the frontage for *Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property*, *Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property*, and *Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land* were found to lack adequate sightlines due to the presence of vertical curvature.

5.11 Utilities

Overhead hydro lines are present at all four (4) alternatives, running parallel to the north of Highway 11. No other underground utilities are found at *Alternative 3 – Crown Land/Private Property*, *Alternative 4 – Crown Land/Private Property*, or *Alternative 6 – Crown Land/Private Property*.

Various utilities are present at *Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land*:

- Bell Canada;
 - Aerial;
 - Possible buried fibre optic;
- Hydro One;
- Ministry of Transportation Ontario (electrical), and
- Township of Opatatika (Sewer and Water).

5.12 Highway Drainage

The existing highway drainage along Highway 11 is generally rural in nature and the surrounding areas are typically comprised of open grass lined ditches conveying runoff to major drainage outlets and crossing culverts. There are concentrated urbanized sections within the project limits that utilize catch basins and relatively small storm sewer networks to facilitate drainage.

It was identified by the Municipality that land fronting onto the Opatatika River can act as a floodplain area. During the spring freshet of 2025, observations of water levels indicated the river water surface was approximately 0.5 m below the soffit of the Highway 11 bridge spanning the river.

6.0 CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Consultation is a fundamental component of the Class EA process. Consultation was ongoing throughout the planning of the project in conjunction with the transportation, engineering and environmental protection principles. It is essential for the success of Class EA studies that the consultation program be fully transparent, open and inclusive; all public / stakeholder communication must be clear, timely and accessible to all. While the Class EA process will not always achieve consensus amongst those who are consulted, consultation at decision points provides a formal process for the collection and dissemination of information and provides an opportunity for the resolution of issues.

The Consultation Program was developed in collaboration with the MTO and meets or exceeds the mandatory requirement of the MTO Class EA for a Group 'B' project. The primary objective of the consultation program was to keep stakeholders informed throughout the study and encourage comments using effective consultation methods. Opportunities were provided throughout the study for interested agencies, stakeholder groups, Indigenous Communities, and individuals to provide input and obtain information about the study.

The consultation program for this study included the following:

- Development and maintenance of an external agency/stakeholder contact list and property owner/interested public contact list;
- Development and maintenance of a project website;
- Preparation and publication of Ontario Government Notices (OGNs), including:
 - Notice of Study Commencement;
 - Notice of Online Public Information Centre, and
 - Notice of Completion.
- Preparation and distribution of notification letters to external agency/stakeholders and property owner/interested public contacts;
- Ongoing communication, negotiation, and consultation with municipalities, agencies, stakeholders, property owners and local businesses, as required;
- Consultation with Indigenous Communities;
- Online Public Information Centre;
- Stakeholder meetings, and
- Summary of the consultation process in the environmental project documentation.

As the study area is located within a French Language Services Area, consultation notification materials were made available in both official languages, English and French.

Consultation Materials can be found in **Appendix J**.

6.1 Project Contact List

An external Contact List of potentially interested stakeholders was developed and maintained throughout this study; updated for completeness and accuracy as required. This list includes federal and provincial government agencies and ministries, municipal staff and elected officials, local Member of Provincial Parliament, local Member of Parliament, Indigenous Communities, emergency services, utility companies, public interest groups, businesses, and property owners/tenants who may be directly or indirectly affected by the project. The agency and Indigenous Community contact list used for this project can be found in **Appendix J**; private stakeholder information is protected under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

6.2 Project Website

A dedicated project website (www.northernhighwayrestareas.com) was developed and updated regularly with information regarding the project throughout the study. The purpose of this website is to keep members of the public informed, share publicly available reports and other materials, and allow for public comments. This website will be continually updated to give information of project milestones, opportunities for public engagement, and other relevant information.

The website was updated as the study progressed and included links to project-specific documents (i.e., study notifications, PIC material). The website will continue to be updated as the study progresses through detail design.

The website was built in compliance with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and delivered in English and French.

6.3 Notice of Study Commencement

The Notice of Study Commencement announced the formal start of the MTO Class EA (2024) process and provided information about what is being proposed and how to get involved in the process. The purpose of the Notice of Study Commencement is to inform the public and external agencies about the study and to seek input from agencies and property owners. In addition, it also directs proponents to the project website for more up to date information.

A Notice of Study Commencement Ontario Government Notice (OGN) advertisement was published in the Cochrane Times-Post and distributed to the project contact list on October 3, 2024.

Notice of Study Commencement comments and project team responses are summarized in **Table 2**.

6.3.1 Stakeholder Meetings

The Project Team met with Municipality of Opatatika staff on November 21, 2024, to discuss potential opportunities for locating the rest centre within the Municipality of Opatatika. The

Municipality identified the existing boat launch area and municipality office as a potential location for a rest centre.

6.4 Notice of Online Public Information Centre (PIC)

A Notice of Online Public Information Centre (PIC) OGN was advertised in the Cochrane Times-Post on September 11, 2025. The Notice of PIC OGN was also distributed to the project contact list, as well as any stakeholder who expressed interest in the project through the project website and from the Notice of Study Commencement by email on September 11, 2025.

The Notice of Online Public Information Centre (PIC) provided information regarding the preliminary design phase, outlined key project details, and included the website address to access the online PIC materials.

Online PIC comments and project team responses are summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Consultation Response Summary		
Comment Theme	Summary of Comment	Summary of Response
Support for Study and Preferred Direction	Stakeholders expressed general support for the study and interest in the proposed improvements along Highway 11.	The project team acknowledged the feedback and thanked stakeholders for their support, confirming that comments would be considered as the project progresses.
Regulatory Review and Environmental Requirements	Agencies requested confirmation that environmental requirements and approvals (e.g., MECP interests) would be addressed through the EA process.	The project team confirmed that environmental considerations and regulatory requirements will be addressed in accordance with applicable legislation and during subsequent design stages.
Property Access and Local Considerations	Members of the public raised questions or concerns related to local access, land use, or potential effects on adjacent properties.	The project team advised that access requirements and local considerations will be reviewed as part of the detailed design, with opportunities for further consultation as the project advances.
Municipal Coordination	Municipal representatives emphasized the importance of coordination with local planning objectives and municipal interests.	The project team confirmed ongoing coordination with the municipality and noted that meetings were held to discuss municipal concerns and project details.
Ongoing Communication	Stakeholders requested to be kept informed of project updates and next steps.	The project team committed to continued communication and information sharing throughout the EA and design process.

6.5 Notice of Study Completion

A Notice of Study Completion OGN was advertised in the Cochrane Times-Post and on the project website on March 5, 2026. Additionally, the Notice was distributed to the project contact list and to stakeholders who expressed interest in the project through the project website by email on March 5, 2026. Finally, the notice was also mailed to residents and businesses in the vicinity of the project limits on March 5, 2026.

The notice contained information about the Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment Study for the new rest centre and notified recipients of this TESR being available for a 30-day public comment period.

6.6 Indigenous Communities Consultation

The Project Team consulted with Indigenous Communities listed below throughout the preliminary design study. All OGNs (Notice of Study Commencement, Notice of Online PIC, and Notice of Completion) were distributed to the following Indigenous Communities:

- Brunswick House First Nation;
- Constance Lake First Nation, and
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation.

There were no comments received from Indigenous Communities during the preliminary design. During detail design, the study team will continue to consult with Indigenous Communities at key milestones throughout the study, as well as engage Indigenous Communities during the Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment to invite participation.

7.0 MITIGATION AND COMMITMENTS TO FUTURE WORK

Mitigation and commitments to future work have been developed for the Preferred Alternative, *Alternative 7 – Crown Land/Municipality of Opatatika Land* and will be refined during detail design.

In order to mitigate the potential impacts to the biological and socio-economic environment, detail design will include the referenced Special Provisions (SP), Non-standard Special Provisions (NSSP), and Ontario Provincial Standard Specifications (OPSS) recommended for the Contract Package. In general, the Contractor is responsible for the protection of people, property, and the natural environment from the environmental impacts and damage that may result from proposed project works.

A Summary of Environmental Concerns and Commitments is provided in **Table 3**.

7.1 Fish and Fish Habitat

There is no fish habitat present within 120 m of the Preferred Alternative, and therefore, no impacts to fish or fish habitat are anticipated as part of this project.

7.2 Terrestrial Ecosystems

The study area had the potential for impacts to existing natural heritage features including:

- Vegetation communities;
- Wetland habitat;
- Spread of invasive and noxious vegetation, and
- Nesting habitat for a wide range of terrestrial and wetland nesting migratory birds.

A Terrestrial Ecosystems Impact Assessment will be undertaken during detail design to determine potential impacts to terrestrial ecosystems within the study area of the Preferred Alternative. The constraints noted in this report will be used to help determine mitigation measures to minimize impacts on sensitive features.

No permits or approvals related to terrestrial ecosystems are anticipated at this time.

7.2.1 Vegetation Communities

No rare or regionally significant vegetation communities are present within the limits of the Preferred Alternative.

Construction activities associated with the rest centre development will result in localized loss and disturbance of vegetation within the study area. A comprehensive review of vegetation impacts within the study area will be undertaken during the detail design and mitigation measures will be developed to minimize impacts.

To mitigate the disturbance of vegetation on the site and beyond, it is recommended that the following be considered during detail design:

- *As per Ontario Provincial Standard Specification (OPSS) 802 – Construction Specification for Topsoil and OPSS 803 – Construction Specification for Vegetation Cover* – Reinstatement areas should be replanted with herbaceous plants using a native seed mix to promote valuable adjacent habitat to the study area.
- *As per OPSS 804 – Construction Specifications for Temporary Erosion Control* – Cover should be utilized as part of the contract for areas where seeding is required.
- Vegetation removals should be completed within an appropriate timing window to avoid impacts to Migratory Birds.

A Landscaping and Plantings Plan will be prepared to identify areas where tree removals are required, as well as make recommendations for tree protection, management of invasive species, and reinstatement of vegetation where required.

7.2.2 Invasive and Noxious Vegetation

The site was not assessed for invasive species during the 2024 terrestrial field investigation but will be assessed during detail design. Should invasive or noxious vegetation be identified on site, appropriate mitigation measures must be implemented to prevent its spread. To ensure that construction activities do not contribute to the proliferation of this and other invasive species, it is recommended that the contract drawings clearly indicate the locations of invasive or noxious species.

7.2.3 Wildlife and Migratory Birds

Nesting for several species of migratory birds is possible at the site. Due to the scope of work it is not anticipated that the project will negatively impact migratory birds or the function of their habitat if the appropriate mitigation measures are adhered to. During detail design the migratory bird timing window shall be confirmed, and it is recommended that the following be included in the Contract Documents during detail design:

- *Operational Constraint (Environmental) – Migratory Bird Protection – General.*

7.2.4 Species at Risk

No known SAR are present at the Preferred Alternative location. Potential SAR habitat (forest and shrubland) is present across the Preferred Alternative location. A Terrestrial Ecosystems Impact Assessment will be undertaken during detail design which will further assess potential SAR or SAR habitat and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

7.3 Erosion and Sediment Control

Disturbance of soils during construction increases the potential for erosion and sedimentation in ditch lines and storm sewers without proper mitigation. During detail design, erosion and sediment control measures shall be developed in accordance with MTO Approach 1: Best Management Practices to minimize migration of sediment off site and protect surface water.

7.4 Groundwater

There are nine (9) wells located within 500 m of the site, which primarily consist of domestic wells on or west of the site.

Groundwater is not anticipated to be impacted by development of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is currently partially developed and will be connected to municipal services, minimizing local groundwater impacts.

During detail design, water-taking requirements for the project area will be determined in accordance with the MECP regulations, including the need for an Environmental Activity and Sector Registry (EASR) for the purposes of construction.

7.5 Contaminated Property and Waste Management

7.5.1 Designated Substances

A Designated Substances Survey (DSS) may be required during detail design to determine the presence of any designated substances on the site. The results of the survey should be included in the Contract Documents to inform the contractor of any designated substances present, in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

7.5.2 Management of Excess Soils

A review of the quantities of excess soils that will be created as a result of the project works will be undertaken during detail design to determine if excess soils can be managed on-site or will need to be removed off site. Any excess earth or disposable fill taken from the work area will be managed in a responsible and environmentally appropriate manner in accordance with *Ontario Regulation 406/19, Onsite and Excess Soil Management* to prevent impacts to the surface geology and groundwater within the study area.

7.6 Surface Water

The existing highway drainage along Highway 11 is predominantly rural, with open grass-lined ditches conveying runoff to major drainage outlets and culverts. A stormwater management plan will be required, which will detail treatment of surface water runoff from the new rest centre. Both quantity and quality of runoff will need to be managed to prevent downstream impacts.

7.7 Noise

Sound impacts are assessed by comparing future sound levels with and without the proposed rest area. The rest area is expected to introduce stationary noise sources, particularly from idling trucks. During detail design, a noise analysis will be conducted to determine impacts to noise sensitive areas in proximity to the proposed Preferred Alternative site. If there are predicted changes in sound levels at the Preferred Alternative site, due to both traffic and stationary sources, noise mitigation (e.g. berms and/or noise walls) will be considered.

7.8 Air Quality

Air quality impacts are assessed by comparing the future air contaminant levels with and without the proposed rest centre. The rest centre is anticipated to be associated with stationary sources of air quality contaminants, most notably truck idling. An air quality analysis will be conducted during detail design to determine impacts to receptors in proximity to the site location.

Construction activities involve heavy equipment that generates air pollutants and dust; however, these impacts are temporary in nature. The emissions are highly variable, difficult to predict, and depend on the specific activities that are taking place and the effectiveness of the mitigation measures. The best manner to deal with these emissions is through diligent implementation of operating procedures such as application of dust suppressants, reduced travel speeds for heavy vehicles, efficient staging of activities and minimization of haul distances, covering up stockpiles, etc. Contract documents will dictate air quality mitigation measures that the Contractor shall implement.

7.9 Designated Areas

There are no known designated areas within or adjacent to the Preferred Alternative.

7.10 Land Use Factors

The Township of Opatatika does not readily provide mapping associated with their Official Plan; the municipal land use designation of the Preferred Alternative is not known. Field investigations indicate the site is partially cleared with a parking area and boat launch. A municipal complex is present immediately west of the site and the Opatatika River is present immediately east of the site. Based on the review, there would be no significant impacts or challenges from the current or future land use within or surrounding the property.

7.11 Transportation

Work along Highway 11 will be required to facilitate the connection to the new rest centre. Impacts to emergency services or student transportation during construction are anticipated to be negligible. It is recommended that consultation and follow-up meetings with emergency

services providers and student transportation providers (i.e. Neobus and CSD Catholique des Grandes Rivieres School Transportation Services) occur during detail design and appropriate notification procedures are included in the contract documents.

7.12 Utilities

The following utilities are located within or adjacent to the Preferred Alternative site within the Highway 11 right-of-way:

- *Bell Canada*;
 - Aerial;
 - Possible buried fibre optic;
- Hydro One;
- Ministry of Transportation Ontario (electrical), and
- Township of Opatatika (Sewer and Water).

Utilities shall be considered during work to ensure minimal disruption and no long-term impacts.

7.13 Cultural Environment

7.13.1 Built Heritage and Cultural Heritage Landscape

There are no known or potential built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes located within the study area, and therefore, no impacts to heritage resources are anticipated.

7.13.2 Archaeology

The site has deep disturbance over parts of its extent, and also contains areas mapped as wetland. However, two historical structures adjacent to the river may be of archaeological significance and the buffers from the wetland area, National Transcontinental Railway, and Opatatika River extend into large portions of the property

A Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment will be completed during detail design within all areas of the preferred site that remain undisturbed or have low potential for prior ground disturbance, including portions of the property adjacent to the existing boat launch parking area, the proposed rest centre footprint, and areas along the Highway 11 frontage where new infrastructure, grading, or utility connections are planned. The assessment will focus on confirming the presence or absence of any archaeological resources within these zones and will be conducted in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists (2011) to ensure compliance with provincial requirements.

8.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND COMMITMENTS

Table 3 summarizes the environmental concerns and mitigation measures associated with the Preferred Alternative and commitments to future work to be undertaken and confirmed during detail design.

Table 3: Summary of Environmental Concerns and Commitments

ID #	Issues/Concerns/Potential Affects	Concerned Agencies	ID #	Mitigation/Protection/Monitoring
1.0 Terrestrial Ecosystems and Species at Risk				
1.1	Loss and disturbance of vegetation, which may impact wildlife and their habitat.	Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) Environment Canada (EC)	1.1.1	During detail design, a comprehensive review of vegetation impacts within the preferred alternative site will be conducted. All trees that are affected by the project works will be identified in the Contract Drawings. A Landscaping Plan will be prepared to identify all areas requiring vegetation reinstatement and to outline measures for minimizing vegetation impacts.
			1.1.2	Minimization of vegetation removal and protection of existing trees during the construction phase through the delineation of areas off-limits to construction activities.
			1.1.3	Slopes and embankment areas that are disturbed shall be restored and stabilized with re-seeding.
1.2	The use of construction equipment may increase the spread of non-native and invasive species.	MECP	1.2.1	Mitigation measures to control invasive and noxious plants during and after construction should be considered during detail design.
1.3	Disturbance of nesting migratory birds could harm the individuals.	MNR EC	1.3.1	During detail design, an impact assessment of migratory bird habitat impacts (both temporary and permanent) within the preferred alternative site will be undertaken. Mitigation will be finalized in detail design.
			1.3.2	Tree clearing and vegetation removals shall be completed outside the breeding bird timing window (to be confirmed during detail design).
			1.3.3	A screening of the study area for the presence of migratory birds or their nests is to be undertaken prior to any disturbance if work will occur during the bird nesting window. The nests and eggs of many species are protected under federal and/or provincial legislation (i.e., MBCA, FWCA).
			1.3.4	If migratory birds or their nests are encountered at any time of the year, works should not continue in the location of the nest until: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After it has been determined by an avian specialist that the young have fledged and vacated the nest and work area; or • An avian specialist determines a suitable buffer distance at which work may continue to prevent disturbance of the bird(s); and • Where a buffer distance has been implemented, an avian specialist must undertake monitoring during construction to ensure migratory birds, their nests, and eggs are not disturbed, destroyed or taken.
1.4	The study area has potential for significant natural heritage features, including species at risk habitat, which may be impacted by proposed works.	MNR MECP	1.4.1	During detailed design, the preferred alternative site will be assessed for the presence of wildlife and species at risk habitat. Targeted surveys will be conducted (if necessary), and appropriate mitigation measures will be developed for implementation during construction to minimize impacts on affected species.
2.0 Erosion and Sediment Control				
2.1	Disturbance of existing vegetation and general grading work in the project area has the potential for erosion and sedimentation concerns due to off-site sensitive receptors (watercourses and wetlands).	MNR MECP	2.1.1	The Erosion and Sediment Control Strategy (Approach 1) will be developed during detail design.
			2.1.2	Temporary erosion and sediment control measures shall be installed and removed according to the locations and timing constraints determined during detail design.
			2.1.3	All disturbed areas should be protected to limit the time that such areas are exposed prior to final application of topsoil and seed.
2.2	Stockpiled construction materials such as aggregate, concrete, and earth may potentially contaminate the study area without proper containment and environmental protection measures.	MNR MECP	2.2.1	Stockpiled materials shall be located no closer than 30 m from a watercourse. Materials shall be protected from erosion and sedimentation through the installation of erosion and sediment controls designed appropriate to the site.

ID #	Issues/Concerns/Potential Affects	Concerned Agencies	ID #	Mitigation/Protection/Monitoring
3.0 Surface Water and Groundwater				
3.1	Construction activities, such as refuelling, can increase the potential for accidental spillage and subsequent contamination of groundwater and surface water sources.	MNR MECP	3.1.1	A spill response plan shall be developed that is to be implemented immediately in the event of a sediment release or spill of a deleterious substance.
			3.1.2	During detail design, water-taking requirements for the project area will be determined in accordance with the MECP regulations including the need for an Environmental Activity Sector Registry (EASR).
4.0 Contaminated Property and Waste Management				
4.1	Designated substances may be present in on-site materials, which may pose a threat to the health and safety of the construction workers.	MECP	4.1.1	A designated substances survey will be carried out during the detailed design phase to identify the presence of any designated substances on site. If any are identified, they will be communicated to the contractor in accordance with Special Provision No. 101F21, <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act Compliance</i> .
4.2	The removal, storage and disposal of excess materials may transfer contaminants around the study area and possibly off-site.	MECP	4.2.2	A review of the quantities of excess soil that will be created as a result of the project works will be undertaken during detail design to determine if excess soils can be managed on-site or will need to be removed off site.
			4.2.2	Any excess earth or disposable fill taken from the work area is to be managed in a responsible and environmentally appropriate manner in accordance with Ontario Regulation 406/19, Onsite and Excess Soil Management to prevent impacts to the surface geology and groundwater within the study area.
5.0 Air Quality				
5.1	It is anticipated that dust and emissions from machinery will be generated during construction.	MECP Nearby Residents and Businesses	5.1.1	Detail design will include requirements for the Contractor to ensure that all equipment is properly maintained and that all pollution control devices on the equipment are operational and properly maintained.
6.0 Noise				
6.1	The rest area is expected to introduce stationary noise sources, particularly from idling trucks, which may impact nearby homes and businesses.	MECP Nearby Residents and Businesses	6.1.1	A noise analysis shall be conducted during detail design to determine impacts to noise sensitive areas in proximity to the Preferred Alternative site. If predicted changes in sound levels at the Preferred Alternative site, due to both traffic and stationary sources, noise mitigation (e.g. berms and/or noise walls) will be considered.
7.0 Traffic Operations				
7.1	Project work will temporarily disturb normal traffic operations on Highway 11. Safety of construction workers, motorists and pedestrians is of primary concern.	Motorists Emergency Services	7.1.1	During detail design, a Traffic Management Plan will be prepared to include provisions for any temporary lane closures and traffic mitigation measures.
			7.1.2	Adjacent landowners should be provided advance notice of construction start and notification of potential entrance impacts that may be required by the construction works
8.0 Utilities				
	Impacts on existing utilities within the study area are anticipated.	Utility providers	8.1.1	Ensure advanced coordination with utility companies for utility relocations during detail design.
9.0 Cultural Environment				
9.1	Areas of the preferred alternative site exhibit archaeological potential.	Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism	9.1.1	A Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment (and any subsequent stages, if required) will be completed by a licensed archaeologist early in detail design and prior to any ground-disturbing activities. Written confirmation from MCM that the archaeological assessment has been entered into the Ontario Public Register of Archaeological Reports must be received before construction proceeds. If previously undocumented archaeological resources or human remains are discovered, all site activities must stop immediately. The requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act and the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act will be followed.

LIST OF REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Archaeological Screening Memo, prepared by Past Recovery Archaeology, dated May 7, 2025.

Ministry of Transportation, Government of Ontario. Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities and Municipal Expressways. 2024. Government of Ontario.

Consultation Plan, Preliminary Design, Detail Design and Class Environmental Assessment for Development of a New Rest Centre in the vicinity of Opatatika/Kapusksing, Ontario, Ontario, GWP 5133-22-00, prepared by Egis, dated December 18, 2024.

Contaminated Property Identification & Waste Management Assessment Report Opatatika-Kapusksing, ON – New Rest Area in Opatatika-Kapusksing, ON – 4 Preferred Alternatives Preliminary Design, Total Project Management for Preliminary Design, Detail Design and Class Environmental Assessment for Five New Rest Centres, GWP 5133-22-00, prepared by Egis, dated July 15, 2025.

Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment Report draft summary, three proposed rest stop areas, Highway 17, Township of Opatatika and Township of Val Rita-Harty, District of Cochrane, Ontario (GWP 5133-22-00), prepared by Northwest Archaeological Assessments Ltd., dated November 2024.

Land Use Report, Preliminary Design for the Development of a New Rest Centre on Highway 11 in the Vicinity of Opatatika and Kapusksing, Ontario, Egis, dated February 27, 2025.

Long List Evaluation Report, Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment for Development of a New Rest Centre in the Vicinity of Opatatika and Kapusksing, Ontario, prepared by Egis, dated March 8, 2025.

MTO Rest Centres Class Environmental Assessment (MTO 5023-E-0006), Opatatika/Kapusksing – White River – Wawa, Preliminary Design – Air Quality, RWDI (2024a).

MTO Rest Centres Class Environmental Assessment (MTO 5023-E-0006), Opatatika/Kapusksing – White River – Wawa, Preliminary Design – Environmental Noise, RWDI (2024b).

Official Plan for the Township of Opatatika. (1988).

Short List Evaluation Report, Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment for Development of a New Rest Centre in the Vicinity of Opatatika and Kapusksing, Ontario, Egis (2024c)

Terrestrial Existing Conditions Report, Class Environmental Assessment for a New Rest Centre in the Vicinity of Opatatika and Kapusksing, Egis (2025a).

The Northern Ontario Highway Rest Areas Design and Implementation Guidance, MTO, November 2018.

LIST OF REFERENCE ACTS

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (S.O. 2005, c. 11)

Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (S.C. 2012, c. 19, s. 52) Note: Repealed and replaced by the Impact Assessment Act in 2019.

Environmental Assessment Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. E.18)

Impact Assessment Act (S.C. 2019, c. 28, s. 1)

Occupational Health and Safety Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1)