



## TSB Recommendation R15-05

### Grade separation of Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, and Fallowfield Road

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada recommends that the City of Ottawa reconsider the need for grade separations at the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings.

Rail transportation safety investigation report	<a href="#">R13T0192</a>
Date the recommendation was issued	02 December 2015
Date of the latest response	January 2025
Date of the latest assessment	January 2025
<a href="#">Rating</a> of the latest response	Satisfactory Intent
<a href="#">File status</a>	Dormant

### Summary of the occurrence

On 18 September 2013, at about 0832 Eastern Daylight Time, westward VIA Rail Canada Inc. (VIA) passenger train No. 51 departed from the VIA station in Ottawa, Ontario, on time and proceeded en route to Toronto, Ontario. At 0847:27, OC Transpo double-decker bus No. 8017 departed from the Fallowfield Station on the OC Transpo bus Transitway. At 0848:06, while proceeding at about 43 mph, the train entered the OC Transpo Transitway crossing, located at Mile 3.30 of VIA's Smiths Falls Subdivision. At the time, the crossing lights, bells and gates were activated. The northbound bus was travelling at about 5 mph with the brakes applied when it struck the train. As a result of the collision, the front of the bus was torn off. The train, comprising 1 locomotive and 4 passenger cars, derailed but remained upright. Among the bus occupants, there were 6 fatalities and 9 serious injuries, and about 25 minor injuries were reported. No VIA crew members or VIA passengers were injured.

The Board concluded its investigation and released report R13T0192 on 02 December 2015.

### Rationale for the recommendation

Originally, grade separations had been planned for Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, and Fallowfield Road. The plans were based on environmental assessments (EAs) conducted in the

late 1990s. At that time, members of the public were opposed to any roadway overpass structure, and the National Capital Commission (NCC) supported the public position. Consequently, overpass options were not considered as part of the EAs. The original plan then focused on the preferred option of open-cut roadway underpass grade separations for each location. However, by February 2003, subsurface testing had determined that the conditions were not suitable for the construction of underpasses. Due to unexpected subsurface conditions, the estimated cost to construct the open-cut roadway underpasses increased from 40 million dollars to more than 100 million dollars. Noting that this option also presented significant risks, the underpass alternatives were not pursued.

Roadway overpass alternatives were then reconsidered. Although the soils in the area were determined to have limited load-bearing capacity, it was noted that roadway overpass structures could have been built using light approach fills and multiple bridge spans. However, construction of any of the roadway overpass options would have required reopening the EAs that had been previously undertaken. The time required to redo the EAs would further delay completion of the project beyond the time constraints imposed through Millennium funding (end of March 2006). This would have resulted in the loss of the Millennium funding, which accounted for approximately 70% of the original estimated project cost.

While it was possible to construct roadway overpass grade separations for Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, and Fallowfield Road, the need to reopen the EAs, the possible loss of Millennium funding and the clear preference for the roadway underpass alternative demonstrated by both the public and the NCC limited the grade separation options considered in 2004. Once the preferred option of open-cut roadway underpasses was no longer available, it was decided in 2004 to forego grade separations and install the level crossings with enhanced automatic warning device (AWD) protection. This decision was based on the following considerations:

1. Population for the south end of Ottawa was approximately 100 000.
2. There were only 10 trains per day.
3. The train/vehicle cross-products were less than the 200 000 commonly used as a threshold for grade separation to be considered for both Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road. Furthermore, the Transitway had not yet been constructed.
4. All passenger trains were stopped at the VIA Fallowfield Station.
5. All trains were restricted to 20 mph over both the crossings.

Once the crossings were constructed, the need for grade separation at Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, and Fallowfield Road was not formally reviewed or reconsidered, nor was it required to be.

By 2013, the following changes had occurred:

1. The population for the south end of Ottawa had increased to 145 062 (45% increase) and was projected to grow to 171 000 by 2020.
2. The number of trains had increased to 23 trains per weekday (130% increase). Any future increase in train traffic on this corridor would further increase the risks associated with the crossings.
3. The cross-product had increased to 699 108 (285% increase) for Woodroffe Avenue and 406 592 (116% increase) for Fallowfield Road. Similarly, the Transitway cross-product had increased from 0 in 2004 to 23 161 in 2013, with a corresponding train/vehicle/occupant cross-product of 532 703.
4. While all VIA passenger trains continued to stop at the VIA Fallowfield Station, some VIA passenger trains were now traversing the crossings at 40 to 60 mph.

Grade separation projects usually involve multiple jurisdictions with funding provided by the railways, the respective road authority and the federal government. The decision to proceed with level crossings was based on known risk factors in 2004. Since that time, changes have occurred in the risk factors such as area population, number of trains, train speed, the number of vehicles, the resulting cross-product and the average number of vehicle occupants. These risk factors will continue to increase with further urban and potential railway development in the area with a commensurate risk that existing level crossing protection may no longer be adequate.

Therefore, the Board recommended that

the City of Ottawa reconsider the need for grade separations at the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings.

#### **TSB Recommendation R15-05**

### **Previous responses and assessments**

#### **February 2016: response from the City of Ottawa**

The City of Ottawa has indicated its intention to move forward with a feasibility study that will review the technical requirements of providing grade separation at the locations recommended in the report. Further, the City will study an additional two level crossings in the area in question in order to have a complete understanding of the remaining level crossings in this part of Ottawa. This study will be undertaken in financial partnership with VIA Rail Canada, recognizing their shared interest in public safety and service reliability at rail crossings.

The results of the study and any action recommended by City staff will be before Ottawa City Council in 2017.

### **March 2016: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

The City of Ottawa, in financial partnership with VIA, will conduct a feasibility study to review the technical requirements of providing grade separation at the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway and Fallowfield Road crossings, as well as at 2 other locations.

The Board is pleased that the City of Ottawa has committed to studying the feasibility of grade separations at the recommended crossings, and commends the City for including additional crossings in the scope of its study. The action proposed by the City of Ottawa is a positive first step toward reconsidering grade separation at these crossings in order to effectively manage the risk of vehicle/train collisions.

Therefore, the Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

### **March 2017: response from the City of Ottawa**

The City of Ottawa, in financial partnership with VIA Rail Canada, has contracted a consultant and progressed with a feasibility study on the three crossings in question and two additional locations at Merivale Road and Jockvale Road respectively. In addition to addressing the feasibility of grade separation, the study will also seek to address any recommendations that may pertain to sequencing of grade separation construction and associated cost estimates.

It is anticipated that the study will be completed and its findings reported to the City's Transportation Committee, a standing committee of City Council, and then to the Ottawa City Council during June/July 2017.

### **March 2017: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

The City of Ottawa, in financial partnership with VIA, contracted a consultant to conduct a grade separation feasibility study. The study will focus on the 3 crossings in question and on 2 other locations. The study will also examine the sequencing of grade separation construction and the cost estimate for each crossing.

By July 2017, it is expected that the completed study will be presented to the City's Transportation Committee, a standing committee of City Council, and then to the Ottawa City Council.

The Board is encouraged that the feasibility study is nearing completion. This action is a positive step toward reconsidering grade separation at the recommended crossings to effectively manage the risk of vehicle/train collisions. Therefore, the Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

## December 2017: response from the City of Ottawa

The City of Ottawa, in partnership with VIA Rail, completed the Barrhaven and Merivale Road Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study in May 2017, and it was presented to the City's Transportation Committee, a standing committee of City Council, and subsequently to City Council in June 2017 (see Agenda Item #15).

The study concluded that the five rail crossing locations studied (including at Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road), should ultimately be grade separated due to the existing and anticipated increases in road, Transitway and rail traffic. It further indicated that such grade separation appears feasible, provided high level cost estimates for those grade separations and suggested a prioritization order: first — Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road; second — Merivale Road; and, third — Jockvale Road. The order of magnitude costs for these rail grade separations (all 2017 dollars) are: Woodroffe Avenue and Transitway (together) - \$145 million, Fallowfield Road — \$130 million, Merivale Road - \$75 million and Jockvale Road - \$80 million.

At the time of receipt of the study, Council also established the Barrhaven Rail Safety Program which anticipates a phased approach to improving safety at rail crossing in Barrhaven for all users. Although the Jockvale Road grade-separation is listed as lower in priority, Council is interested in a grade separation in the near-term for a multi-use pathway at this location. This is due to the high number of residents, including children, crossing the rail line on foot and on bike to access schools, churches, and other community amenities.

Even though the issue of funding for the construction of the grade separations has not been resolved, City Council is taking steps towards their eventual implementation — starting with their environmental assessment studies. In September 2017, the City's Transportation Committee reviewed the Statement of Work (scoping documents) for the Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road Rail Grade Separation Environmental Assessment Study, as well as the Statement of Work for the Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade Separation Environmental Assessment Study (see Agenda Item #1).

New environmental assessment (EA) studies are required because the previously completed ones are dated. The Statements of Work were approved by Committee with direction that they be undertaken subject to funding in the City's 2018 budget.

In November 2017, the draft City of Ottawa 2018 budget was released and it proposes a new Barrhaven Rail Safety Program with funding in the amount of \$3.5 million. It states that the first priority for these funds would be to undertake environmental assessment studies for rail grade separations at Woodroffe Avenue, the Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road, and at the multi-use pathway which runs along Jockvale Road. Council will consider the budget for final approval on December 13, 2017.

The remaining EA (grade separation at Merivale Road) will be addressed at a future date. Similar to Jockvale (road-rail crossing), the Merivale crossing location is not the subject of the TSB's 2015 review. Additionally, it should be noted that the currently planned Jockvale EA is for the pathway crossing only. An EA study would also need to be done in the future for the adjacent Jockvale Road crossing of the rail line.

### **March 2018: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

The Barrhaven and Merivale Road Rail Crossing Grade Separation Study was completed in May 2017. The study concluded that the 5 rail crossing locations (including Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road) should be grade-separated due to the existing traffic, and the anticipated increases in road traffic, transitway traffic, and rail traffic. The study also concluded that these grade separations are feasible.

The issue of funding for the construction of the grade separations has not yet been resolved. However, steps were taken towards the eventual implementation of the grade separations, including:

- In September 2017, the City of Ottawa's Transportation Committee reviewed the statement of work for the Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road Rail Grade Separation Environmental Assessment Study. The statement of work was approved, with the direction that work will be undertaken subject to funding in the City's 2018 budget.
- In November 2017, the draft 2018 budget was released, which included funding (\$3.5 million) for the Barrhaven Rail Safety Program. It was stated that the first priority for these funds would be the EA studies, including the grade separations at Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road.
- In December 2017, City Council approved the \$3.5 million in the 2018 budget to undertake the EA studies. The City has started the process to procure consultant services to assist with these studies.

The Board is encouraged that the grade separation study has been completed, and that the procurement process for consultant services to undertake the EA has started. The Board looks forward to the completion of the EA studies. These actions are positive steps toward establishing grade separation at the recommended crossings to effectively manage the risk of vehicle/train collisions. The Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

## **January 2019: response from the City of Ottawa**

In May 2018, the City completed the procurement process to retain a consultant and initiated the following two Environmental Assessment Studies as part of the Barrhaven Rail Safety Program:

- Barrhaven Rail Grade-Separation (Woodroffe Ave, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road) Environmental Assessment Study; and
- Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study.

On June 27, 2018, City Council further directed City staff to immediately undertake an Environmental Assessment Study to convert the existing Southwest Transitway between Baseline Station and Barrhaven Town Centre to a Light Rail Transit (LRT) facility (Motion No. 72/8), such that the results can inform the upcoming City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Update.

Since the study areas for the Barrhaven LRT and the Barrhaven Rail Grade-Separation studies overlap and include common design issues, process requirements, study durations and consultation activities; the two Environmental Assessment studies were integrated into one study. The revised Environmental Assessment Study is titled as the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre). This will bring efficiencies to the Environmental Assessment process, streamline consultation and project management activities, and reduce costs to the City. The schedule of the original grade-separation study is still maintained with this new combined study approach.

The Environmental Assessment studies are expected to be completed as follows:

- Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) – September 2020.
- Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study – December 2019.

As noted in our correspondence of December 15, 2018, the remaining environmental assessment for rail grade-separations at Merivale Road and Jockvale Road will be addressed at a future date as these two crossing locations are not the subject of the TSB's 2015 review.

## **March 2019: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

In May 2018, with the completion of the procurement process to retain a consultant, the EA study for grade separations at Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road (as part of the Barrhaven Rail Safety Program) was initiated.

In June 2018, as part of the update to the City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan, City staff was directed by City Council to undertake an EA study to convert the existing Southwest Transitway between Baseline Station and Barrhaven Town Centre to a light rail transit (LRT) facility. With the overlap between the study areas for the Barrhaven LRT and the Barrhaven

Rail Grade-Separation projects, the 2 EA studies were integrated into 1 study. The revised EA study (i.e., the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre)) is expected to be completed by September 2020.

The Board is encouraged that the EA study for grade separations at Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield Road has started. The Board looks forward to the completion of the EA study. These actions are positive steps toward establishing grade separation at the recommended crossings to effectively manage the risk of vehicle/train collisions. The Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

#### **December 2019: response from the City of Ottawa**

In response to the status of the environmental assessment studies:

- The Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study's recommendations were approved by City of Ottawa Council on September 11, 2019. A Notice of Completion was posted and the public had a final opportunity to provide comments on the Environmental Study Report. As the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks did not receive any Part II Order request by the deadline of December 24, 2019, the Jockvale study is considered complete and approved in accordance with the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.
- The Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) is still planned to be presented to City Council by no later than September 2020. As this study is following Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process, it will require Ministry approval, which is expected to be obtained by May 2021.

Regarding work in the corridor:

- On-going maintenance of the corridor continues.
- Berm and grass cutting occurs three times per year.
- Pruning is done on an as-needed basis.

#### **March 2020: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

In 2019, the environmental study for the Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation was completed and approved in accordance with the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*.

With respect to Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway and Fallowfield Road, work has been ongoing on the EA study for the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation. This study is expected to be completed and presented to Ottawa City Council by September 2020. As the study is following the Province of Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process, ministry approval is required, with a decision expected by May 2021.

In addition, ongoing work is being performed in the vicinity of these crossings, including maintenance of the corridor, berm and grass cutting, and pruning on an as-needed basis.



The Board looks forward to the completion and approval of the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA study. The Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

#### **January 2021: response from the City of Ottawa**

In response to the status of the environmental assessment studies:

- The Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study's recommendations were approved by City of Ottawa Council on September 11, 2019. A Notice of Completion was posted, and the public had a final opportunity to provide comments on the Environmental Study Report. As the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks did not receive any Part II Order request by the deadline of December 24, 2019, the Jockvale study is considered complete and approved in accordance with the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.
- The Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) was approved by City Council on November 25, 2020. As this study is following Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process, it will require Ministry approval, which is expected to be obtained by July 2021.

Regarding work in the corridor:

- The city monitors and maintains sightlines in accordance with Ministry of Transportation of Ontario standards. The city confirms that there are no sightline issues from either direction of traffic. City staff monitor sightlines on a regular basis, scheduling preventative maintenance when required. The warning beacon light installed above the railway crossing sign ahead warning sign in the northbound direction is also being maintained regularly and remains a safety precaution in place.

#### **March 2021: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

The environmental study for the Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation is completed and approved in accordance with the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*.

The Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) was approved by City Council on 25 November 2020 and will be submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) for its consideration, with a decision expected by July 2021.

In addition, the City continues to monitor the crossings in the corridor and ensures that clear sightlines are maintained. Preventive maintenance in the vicinity of the crossings (including the advance warning beacon light in the northbound direction) is also being performed when required.

The Board notes that the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA study is completed, and looks forward to its review and approval by the Ontario MECP.

The Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

#### **November 2021: response from the City of Ottawa**

In response to the status of the environmental assessment studies:

- As of December 24, 2019, the Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study is considered complete and approved in accordance with the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.
- The Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation EA Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) was approved by City Council on November 25, 2020. The project is currently undergoing the formal documentation procedure in accordance with the Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process. A Notice of Commencement was posted on October 23, 2021. Approval from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks is expected in April 2022.

Regarding work in the corridor:

- The City monitors and maintains sightlines in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario Standards and Transport Canada's Grade Crossing Standards. City staff monitor sightlines on a regular basis, scheduling preventative maintenance when required. The warning beacon light installed above the railway crossing ahead warning sign in the northbound direction is being maintained regularly and remains a safety precaution in place for the Transitway. The last inspection done by City staff was Sept 1, 2021 for Woodroffe and Fallowfield at-grade crossings. The at-grade crossing on the Transitway was last inspected by City staff on Sept. 29, 2021. The City confirms there are no sightline issues. The three locations were last inspected by Transport Canada in November 2019.

#### **March 2022: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

The environmental study for the Jockvale Road Multi-Use Pathway Rail Grade-Separation is completed and approved in accordance with the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act*.

The Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study (Baseline Station to Barrhaven Town Centre) was approved by Ottawa City Council on 25 November 2020. A Notice of Commencement was posted on 23 October 2021 and approval from the MECP is expected by April 2022.

In addition, the City of Ottawa continues to monitor the crossings in the corridor and ensures that clear sightlines are maintained. Preventative maintenance in the vicinity of the crossings (including the advance warning beacon light in the northbound direction) is also being performed when required. The City of Ottawa confirmed that there have not been any recent sightline issues.

The Board notes that the Barrhaven LRT and Rail Grade-Separation Environmental Assessment Study is completed, and looks forward to its approval by the Ontario MECP.

The Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

### November 2022: response from the City of Ottawa

In response to the status of the environmental assessment studies:

- The City of Ottawa intends to terminate the current transit project assessment process for the Barrhaven Light Rail Transit Planning and Environmental Assessment Study process in November of 2022. The notification to terminate the current TPAP process will be provided to the MECP shortly based on Council direction to further study a modification to the alignment between Knoxdale and the Nepean Sportsplex. However, a new Notice of Project Commencement is expected to be issued in June of 2023, following the completion of the above-noted further study/refinement to the functional design, with expected Ministerial Approval in December of 2023. Discussions regarding the Capacity Agreement for the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan are on-going and an agreement is in its final stages, with signature from the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan aiming to be received by end of 2022.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding work in the corridor:

- The City monitors and maintains sightlines in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario Standards and Transport Canada's Grade Crossing Standards. City staff monitor sightlines on a regular basis, scheduling preventative maintenance when required. The warning beacon light installed above the railway crossing ahead warning sign in the northbound direction is being maintained regularly and remains a safety precaution in place for the Transitway.
- The at-grade crossing of the Transitway was reviewed on July 13th of 2022, as an update to a previous assessment that was completed on April 7th 2022. In both cases, it was confirmed that all signs and markings associated with the at-grade crossing were sufficient.
- While the current condition of trees and vegetation along the rail corridor on either side of the Transitway meet the minimum requirements set by Transport Canada in the *Grade Crossing Regulations*, OC Transpo recommended in June 2019 that the City exceed the sight distance requirements and improve the sightlines by clearing additional vegetation along the rail corridor. Based on this recommendation, the additional vegetation was cleared in the Fall of 2019. As part of the current review process in 2022, the Rail Safety Specialist is working with City of Ottawa Forestry to confirm the scope of work necessary to remove the additional vegetation along the corridor once again. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, this work will be completed before the end of the 2022 year.

---

<sup>1</sup> All responses are those of the stakeholders to the TSB in written communications and are reproduced in full. The TSB corrects typographical errors in the material it reproduces without indication but uses brackets [ ] to show other changes or to show that part of the response was omitted because it was not pertinent.

- Checks on the flashing beacon system on the northbound approach to the at-grade crossing are completed monthly, with the next monthly check set to occur on November 22nd, 2022. All checks performed in 2022 have confirmed that the system is in good working condition.

Regarding OC Transpo's requirement to conduct regular reviews of all at-grade crossings City-wide with regular OC Transpo service, OC staff are currently working on a plan to complete an update to these reviews. Staff continue to work closely with the Rail Safety Specialist to ensure that these reviews can be completed regularly and that any action items or changes are completed quickly and are documented accordingly.

### **January 2023: Update to the response from the City of Ottawa**

#### **In response to the impacts the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings:**

A Capacity Agreement with the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation was signed and received at the end of December 2022. Staff are currently in the process of contacting all Indigenous Stakeholders for required consultation. The Barrhaven Light Rail and Grade Separations Environmental Study (for Stage 3) will consider and provide a recommended functional design for Woodroffe Avenue, Fallowfield Road and the future Light Rail Transit Line overpasses as they cross the current VIA Rail Line. Timing of construction is currently not identified (minimum 8 years out) as it will depend on future funding and contributions from senior levels of government.

#### **Regarding what the assessments entailed for the crossings related to this recommendation?**

The at-grade crossing of the Transitway was reviewed on July 13th of 2022, as an update to a previous assessment that was completed on April 7th, 2022. The assessment included an extensive review of quality of the signage, pavement marking and vegetation. In both cases, it was confirmed and documented that all signs and pavement markings associated with the at-grade crossing were sufficient.

### **March 2023: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

After the TSB first published its recommendation in December 2015, the City of Ottawa, in financial partnership with VIA Rail Canada Inc., conducted a grade separation study that included the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings. The study concluded that the crossing locations studied should ultimately be grade separated.

Since then, City Council took steps toward the eventual implementation of the grade separations, one of which was an environmental assessment (EA) study for the Barrhaven rail grade separation, which covers the Woodroffe Avenue, Southwest Transitway and Fallowfield road rail. In 2018, this EA study was merged with an EA study related to a Light Rail Transit (LRT) facility in the area, as the 2 studies overlapped. The completed study was approved by City

Council on 25 November 2020. The next step was to complete the formal documentation procedure in accordance with Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process, including obtaining approval from the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). However, the process was terminated in November 2022, based on Council direction to further study a modification to the alignment between Knoxdale and the Nepean Sportsplex. Upon completion of this further study, a new Notice of Project Commencement is expected to be issued in June 2023, with expected approval from MECP in December 2023. A capacity agreement with the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation was signed and received at the end of December 2022; all indigenous stakeholders will be contacted for required consultation. Timing of construction is currently not identified, but the City of Ottawa estimates that it will be at least 8 years in the future, and it will depend on funding and contributions from senior levels of government.

In addition to the work related to the eventual grade separations, the City of Ottawa continues to monitor and maintain the existing at-grade crossings. Preventative maintenance in the vicinity of the crossings is being performed when required. The at-grade crossing of the Transitway was reviewed on 13 July 2022, as an update to a previous assessment that was completed on 07 April 2022. The assessment included an extensive review of the quality of the signage and pavement markings, which were considered sufficient. The City of Ottawa also continues to monitor and maintain sightlines in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario Standards and Transport Canada's *Grade Crossings Standards*; as part of this effort, it cleared vegetation in 2019 to exceed the sight distance requirements and improve sightlines, and it is expected that more vegetation will be cleared by the end of 2023.

The Board acknowledges the progress made to date toward the implementation of grade separations at the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings and notes that the City of Ottawa also continues to monitor and proactively maintain the level crossings at those locations in accordance with existing standards.

The Board also recognizes that the grade separation projects are a significant undertaking requiring planning, consultations, various levels of approval, and funding in order to proceed. However, until the grade separations are constructed, the identified risks will remain. For this reason, the Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

## Latest response and assessment

### December 2024: response from the City of Ottawa

The Barrhaven Light Rail and Grade Separations Environmental Assessment Study has established a recommended functional design for Woodroffe Avenue, Fallowfield Road and the future Light Rail Transit Line overpasses as they cross the current VIA Rail line. As part of the project planning, the City has undertaken extensive consultation, including consultation with the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, who have provided comments on the project. In order to finalize the Environmental Assessment, the Transit and Rail Project Assessment

Process (TRPAP) was initiated on 29 June 2024. The time period to provide written comments on the Environmental Project Report (EPR) ended on 15 November 2024. Currently, the project falls within the Ontario Minister's (MECP) review period, with a notification on the provincial Environmental Assessment Study expected by 20 December 2024. Timing of construction is currently not identified as it will depend on future funding and contributions from senior levels of provincial government.

Regarding OC Transpo's requirement to conduct regular reviews of all at-grade crossings City-wide with regular OC Transpo service, staff have successfully completed assessments of the existing at-grade crossings with conventional buses, and all the at-grade crossings that were assessed were in compliance with the City's guidelines for the evaluations as provided. As part of this review, staff continue to monitor and maintain sightlines in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario standards and Transport Canada's *Grade Crossings Standards* by continuing to clear vegetation on a regular basis in accordance with ongoing practices.

Furthermore, staff also continue to review the location of specific bus stops in consideration of their proximity to at-grade crossings. While there is no imminent concern at these locations, staff are continuously evaluating whether their locations could be improved further.

#### **January 2025: updated response from the City of Ottawa**

On December 23, 2024, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) advised the City that it could proceed with issuing a Statement of Completion for the project assessment process. With this step, the Environmental Assessment will be completed, and the City may proceed with implementing the project in accordance with the Environmental Project Report (EPR) and subject to any other required permits and approvals.

Within the EPR, *Chapter 9: Implementation and Approvals* documents the future commitments that must be satisfied with respect to the project.

Regarding next steps, the City is currently in the process of updating its Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which will identify project priorities and implementation timelines. At this time, there is no funding identified to implement the project, and it is expected that support from senior levels of government will be required for the project to move forward. Once funding is secured, the City will initiate the detail design process.

#### **January 2025: TSB assessment of the response (Satisfactory Intent)**

After the TSB first published its recommendation in December 2015, the City of Ottawa, in financial partnership with VIA Rail Canada Inc. (VIA), conducted a grade separation study that included the Woodroffe Avenue, Transitway, and Fallowfield Road level crossings. The study concluded that the crossing locations studied should ultimately be grade separated.

Since the last assessment in March 2023, the Barrhaven Light Rail and Grade Separations Environmental Assessment Study established a recommended functional design for Woodroffe Avenue, Fallowfield Road, and the future Light Rail Transit Line overpasses as they cross the

current VIA line. On 29 June 2024, the Transit and Rail Project Assessment Process (TRPAP) was initiated, and an Environmental Project Report (EPR) was created. The period for receiving written comments from stakeholders on the EPR ended on 15 November 2024. The project assessment process falls within the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and requires a notice from the Minister on whether to allow the project to proceed, along with any associated conditions.<sup>2</sup> On 23 December 2024, the MECP issued a letter indicating that the City could proceed with issuing a statement of completion to finalize the project assessment process. The letter further notes that, with this step complete, the City may proceed with implementing the project in accordance with the EPR, subject to any other required permits and approvals.

The City is updating its Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which will identify project priorities and implementation timelines. The City indicated that, once funding is secured, it will initiate the detail design process.

The City conducted regular reviews of all at-grade crossings with regular OC Transpo service, and all those crossings were in compliance with the City's guidelines. The City also continues to monitor and maintain sightlines in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario's standards and Transport Canada's *Grade Crossings Standards*. Lastly, the City continues to review the location of specific bus stops in consideration of their proximity to at-grade crossings.

The Board recognizes that grade separation is a significant undertaking requiring planning, consultations, various levels of approval, and funding in order to proceed. However, until the grade separations are constructed, the identified risks will remain. For this reason, the Board considers the response to Recommendation R15-05 to show **Satisfactory Intent**.

### File status

Given that the timeline associated with the City of Ottawa's process to complete these grade separations is anticipated to be lengthy, the Board will periodically review the City of Ottawa's progress in the future.

This deficiency file is **Dormant**.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, *Guide to Environmental Assessment Requirements for Transit Projects*, section 2.4 – Minister's powers, available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-environmental-assessment-requirements-transit-projects#section-1> (last accessed 29 January 2025).